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EDITORIAL

The Old Testament Today

It was decided a year ago that the Fourth Quarter of The Student World should be on The Relevance of the Old Testament. And now the question is relevance to what? Today, when war pursues its destructive course in East and West, is the Old Testament still relevant?

Some would say it was more relevant, and would choose passages which seem to foretell the terrible events of our day. This leads on to the unsavoury practice of assuming that you are on the Lord's side, and then finding suitable names to call your enemies. There is no surer way of dragging the Bible into disrepute with intelligent and sensitive minds.

But there is a real sense in which the Bible is supremely relevant in a time of human bewilderment, distress and tragedy. One who should have contributed to this issue of The Student World wrote just before his mobilisation: "Events have thrown down our purposes. In these days when we are burying our most precious books in a special cellar, when all people here oscillate between anxiety and futility, I am reading through Amos, Micah, Habakkuk..., and I am surprised to see that they are infinitely more actual and immediate than all the news of the papers." Then on the 4th of September he wrote from the front, mentioning certain familiar Psalms, and adding, "how concrete the word of God becomes in our time!"

Can we capture that sense of relevance? Some of us begin very far back with an almost complete ignorance of the Old Testament; others know it in a sense too well. Now is the time to take the Old Testament seriously, listening, as Professor de Boer puts it, with our whole heart and mind to the meaning of the authors. We shall find that God has been dealing with men like us, and nations like our own, for long centuries; that His judgments have been executed, and His mercy shown. The prophets will startle us because they seem to know our condition better than we know it ourselves; the book of Jeremiah may have offended us by its length, now it may alarm us by its realism.

Someone may say that in this Year of Grace we should have written solely of the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Certainly the value of the study of the Old Testament to us as Christians depends upon our knowledge of the New. But perhaps the weakness of our faith, and the poverty of our living, which have brought us to this pass, have arisen in part from our sentimental view of Jesus. It is only as we learn from the Old Testament how He takes His place in history that we shall know the wrath, and patient love, of God for sinful man today.

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It would be unwise now to forecast, as has been the custom in the past, the next four issues of The Student World. We shall try to help the common thinking of our fellowship in the Federation at a time when conferences and correspondence are peculiarly difficult. The subject of the First Quarter in 1940 will be: God's Cause and our Causes.

R. C. M.

The Relevance of the Old Testament Today

W. T. ELMSLIE

"As I see the moving life of Europe today, doors open to understand many and many chapters of the Bible that were for a long time shut for us", wrote a friend from Czechoslovakia the other day. In other words, the Bible has a vital message for members of a nation in dire distress.

It is said that in the schools in some countries the teaching of the Old Testament is forbidden. Certainly a friend of mine was arrested and imprisoned because he ventured to preach on the second Psalm. Some members of the Secret Police who were present took the opportunity of reading through the whole psalm, and decided that it attacked their rulers, and threatened their destruction. So the Old Testament is evidently considered by at least some members of the Secret Police to be a dangerous book, just as during the War of 1914-1918 the Sermon on the Mount was considered dangerous by the authorities in several countries on both sides of the conflict.

The fact is that God still speaks through this old Book, as His Spirit makes it live as His Word for believers and opponents alike.

A Living God

The Old Testament reveals a living God, Who does things. He takes His time, He does not always act as men would wish, but you cannot leave Him out of your reckoning, as modern piety has been inclined to do silently, regretfully or apologetically, and modern impiety quite blatantly. In the long run, God prevails.

Read for the strengthening of your faith, if you will,

those stories in the Book of Daniel that Jewish mothers used to tell to their children for the strengthening of their faith in days of desperate crisis and trial. Does it seem that God is dead ? Then remember Daniel and his friends, who with quiet faith met every threat, and whose faith was justified. If you read that third chapter, let your voice dwell on all those repetitions designed to emphasize the grandeur and the irresistible might of Nebuchadnezzar, — the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, and all the rest of them ; the people, nations and languages ; the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut and all the remainder of the orchestra ! And then come to that superb climax, — “ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

Of course, if you are looking for a historical proof that God always prevails, such a story as this will not convince you ; nor, I think, was it ever meant as such a proof. It is a vivid setting forth of what faith knows to be a fact. If the Jews sought a historical proof of God's active intervention in human history, they would have pointed, I fancy, to the deliverance of their nation from Egypt. For them that was the signal instance of Divine intervention. It was not that the Ten Plagues, or the Crossing of the Red Sea, or the Overthrow of the Amalekites, or the Provision of Manna, or any other isolated incident was miraculous, and so a proof of God's activity ; it was rather that there was no accounting for that deliverance from the might of Egypt on any other terms than on those of Divine initiative and Divine guidance and Divine protection. The Hebrews in Egypt had neither initiative nor loyalty nor even hope. Moses was anything but one of those born leaders, who must for ever be doing great things ; brought up in Pharaoh's court, passionate, exiled, he shrank from responsibility and leadership. It was God, God alone, Who brought the children of Israel

out of Egypt. He did more than help them to escape ; He almost coerced them into willingness to escape. He did more than enable them to carry on, during difficult days ; He almost compelled them to want to carry on, when they would much rather have given up a quest that was hardly of their own choosing.

Explain it as you will, said the old Hebrews in effect, to us this is the grand instance of God intervening in history. And you will not persuade us that the God Who has once done that has now abdicated ! He is still a living, active God ; and though you may not always be able to forecaste His activity, nor even to recognise it at once as His ; yet as a matter of fact He is the one force in the universe with which on the long view and in the end you have to reckon.

One Increasing Purpose

The Old Testament, moreover, is relevant today in that it shows that God has a purpose for the world ; and that the drama of human history, which from one point of view might be regarded simply as the record of the selfish struggles of men and nations, may more truly be regarded as God's slow and patient working out of that purpose.

How the first Christian missionaries seized upon this truth ! In Christ they had discovered the key to the whole process, which hitherto had seemed so uncertain and mysterious. So Stephen in his Apology, and Paul as he strove to explain why the Jewish people had rejected the Saviour, turned to the Old Testament with a new and quickened interest, as they discovered in it (to use a phrase that came into vogue much later) "Christ on every page".

Even those records of the kings of Judah and Israel gain a new significance, as we find them set against the background of the purpose of a holy and righteous God. One did evil in His sight, another did good. How they are judged by their relation to God's purposes ! Here too is the grand principle of the prophets, who judge the

actions of the present, and forecaste the inevitable future, in the light of what they know of God and of His purposes for mankind. Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, as well as all the host of lesser races and tribes round about Israel, find their place and their importance solely in relation to God's increasing purpose, even when they themselves are entirely unconscious of it. What matters if a nation achieves an empire or builds up an ideology, if it be working not in line with, but contrary to the purposes of God ?

In days when national might and racial ambitions seem alone to be important, it is good to read again a volume that collects within its pages the gathered insight of centuries ; and that shows another and a nobler purpose that alone persists in spite of every setback, being the very purpose of Almighty God. The records may speak of Egypt and of Assyria, but for the modern reader it is the nations and empires of today that are set forth, with all their passionate and bitter strife, over against the eternal purposes of God.

Trouble and Disaster

I was re-reading the Book of Job the other day, that superb poetic drama from the dawn of the world. How it grips one today, as one seeks to read it with some measure of insight and imagination, illumined by the Holy Spirit in one's heart. Here is a godly man in the enjoyment of prosperity ; and then, in a trice, it is all gone and he himself is destitute and ill. In the spacious days of Queen Victoria, it may be, things like that did not happen ; the story might have seemed far-fetched. But today... well, it might have been a German in that year when the mark lost its value overnight, or an American when the great depression choked business, or a Jew in Central Europe any day, or a Czech... or any one of us, today, tomorrow, or the day after. For in these days there is, indeed, no security ; and some, parodying John Knox, might add, " not even in the Church of Jesus Christ, ever fighting under the cross " !

Is goodness, then, no guarantee of security? Does it not pay to be good? "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure"; how very modern all that is! And what a tremendous triumph of faith, the quiet unshaken faith that may not understand life's mysteries, but that does know God, that a book that contains such a challenge should yet be bound up in this volume that we call the Old Testament!

Plato's *Phaedo*, that describes the last hours of Socrates, deals with the question of immortality. The philosopher's friends try to find proof that death is not the end, and Socrates himself seeks to support them; but one by one the arguments that are brought forward are found to fail. Then Socrates drinks the poison, and dies; and, strange paradox, you *know* that death is not the end! Just so you may read the Book of Job; you are faced baldly with the challenge of the prosperity of the wicked and the misfortunes of the righteous; the solutions that are brought forward in support of faith fail to convince; but when you lay the book down, you *know* that Job is right — "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"; and you rise up to meet your own problems and your own disasters with new courage and with quiet resolve, for you are assured beyond a peradventure that the righteous are in the hand of God.

The Earth is the Lord's

Regarded as secular history, the Old Testament tells a tale of failure. We begin heroically, with Abraham setting out at the call of God, not knowing whither he went, like any Columbus. We ought, by rights, to conclude with the triumph and honour of the nation that he founded. But instead we are offered a few brief periods of village glory, struttings of heroes on an almost insignificant platform, well-nigh unnoticed by the records of the Great Powers of those days; and for the most part a story of high ambitions and wretched failures, of good intentions warped to foolish ends; a nation divided, exiled, and at length partially restored by the favour of a mightier

people ; a handful of more or less religious patriots precariously dwelling in the city of Jerusalem, where the worship of God is not quite wholly extinguished.

Over against that story, and running continuously through it in the inspired utterances of men of vision, as well as in the dimmer faith of ordinary people, is the utter certainty that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Say what you will, let the facts of history be what they may, the earth is God's, and He rules it in righteousness. All appearances may be against your faith, but God remains unchanged ; the facts may seem to disprove His governance, so much the worse for the facts !

This is not the place to discuss the grounds for such faith ; here our task is simply to note it. For many of us in the world today hold the same faith, for reasons that seem good to us ; but those reasons are not that God's governance is plain to be seen. The reverse is rather the case, and our faith is often miserably weak and poor. That is why the Old Testament is to me, at least, so vitally relevant today ; for it shows me men whose faith is my faith, and who, faced by still greater evidence of its absurdity (as it might well appear) yet stood fast in that faith, nothing daunted ; convinced, not only that their faith was true, but that they were called to witness to it in the face of all the world.

The second Isaiah has a magnificent imaginative picture of a great gathering of all nations, in which God challenges them to bring forth their gods and show proofs of their divinity. The idols are set up in a row, and are questioned. "What do they know of history ?" Silence ! "What do they know of coming events ?" Silence ! "What do they know of anything ?" Silence ! They have nothing to say for themselves, and no one to say anything for them !

Now God will prove Himself in the eyes of all nations, and how does He do it ? He points to a little group of wretched exiles, driven out of their own land, their homes in ruins, their city destroyed, their very temple burned to the ground ; they themselves transported into a distant

country, where they may be under the constant surveillance of their conquerors ; the only people in all the world at the time who knew Him. " Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. " I have no other witnesses, He declares, but the men who know Me ; My cause depends on them ; but to them I have entrusted it. " Therefore ye are my witnesses that I am God. "

I read a passage like that when it seems that God's cause is doomed amidst the troubles and forebodings of the world today ; and with startling relevance I hear God saying to me, " Therefore you are My witness, you who know *Me* in Jesus Christ, my witness that I am God. "

The Old Testament and the Fathers of the Church

GEORGE V. FLOROVSKY

The famous phrase of St. Augustine can be taken as typical of the whole patristic attitude towards the Old Dispensation. *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet. Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet.* The New Testament is an accomplishment or a consummation of the Old. Christ Jesus is the Messiah spoken of by the prophets. In Him all promises and expectations are fulfilled. The Law and the Gospel belong together. And nobody can claim to be a true follower of Moses unless he believes that Jesus is the Lord. Any one who does not recognise in Jesus the Messiah, the Anointed of the Lord, does thereby betray the Old Dispensation itself. Only the Church of Christ keeps now the right key to the Scriptures, the true key to the prophecies of old. Because all these prophecies are fulfilled in Christ.

St. Justin rejects the suggestion that the Old Testament is a link holding together the Church and the Syna-

gogue. For him quite the opposite is true. All Jewish claims must be formally rejected. The Old Testament no longer belongs to the Jews. It belongs to the Church alone. And the Church of Christ is therefore the only true Israel of God. The Israel of old was but an undeveloped Church. The word "Scriptures" itself in early Christian use meant first of all just the Old Testament and in this sense obviously this word is used in the Creed: "according to the Scriptures", i. e. according to the prophecies and promises of the Old Dispensation.

The Unity of the Bible

The Old Testament is copiously quoted by all early writers. And even to the Gentiles the message of salvation was always presented in the context of the Old Testament. This was an argument from antiquity. The Old Covenant was not destroyed by Christ, but renewed and accomplished. In this sense Christianity was not a new religion, but rather the oldest. The new Christian "Scriptures" were simply incorporated into the inherited Hebrew Bible, as its organic completion. And only the whole Bible, both Testaments together, was regarded as an adequate record of Christian Revelation. No break between the two Testaments, but a unity of Divine economy. And the first task of Christian theology was to show and to explain in what way the Old Dispensation was the preparation and the anticipation of this final Revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The Christian message was not merely a proclamation of some doctrines, but first of all a record of mighty acts and deeds of God through the ages. It was a history of Divine guidance, culminating in the person of Christ Jesus whom God has sent to redeem His people. God has chosen Israel for His inheritance, to be His people, to be the keeper of His truth, and to this Chosen People alone the Divine Word was entrusted. And now the Church receives this sacred heritage.

The Old Testament as a whole was regarded as a Christian prophecy, as an "evangelical preparation". Very early some special selections of the Old Testament

texts were compiled for the use of Christian missionaries. The *Testimonia* of St. Cyprian is one of the best specimens of the kind. And St. Justin in his *Dialogue with Trypho* made an attempt to prove the truth of Christianity from the Old Testament alone. The Marcionite attempt to break the New Testament away from its Old Testament roots was vigorously resisted and condemned by the Great Church. The unity of both Testaments was strongly emphasised, the inner agreement of both was stressed. There was always some danger of reading too much of Christian doctrine into the writings of the Old Testament. And historical perspective was sometimes dangerously obscured. But still there was a great truth in all these exegetical endeavours. It was a strong feeling of the Divine guidance through the ages.

The Old Testament as Allegory

The history of the Old Testament interpretation in the Early Church is one of the most thrilling but embarrassing chapters in the history of Christian doctrine. With the Greek Old Testament the Church inherited also some exegetical traditions. Philo, this hellenised Jew from Alexandria, was the best exponent of this pre-Christian endeavour to commend the Old Testament to the Gentile world. He adopted for this task a very peculiar method, a method of allegory. Philo himself had no understanding of history whatever. Messianic motives were completely overlooked or ignored in his philosophy of the Bible. For him the Bible was just a system of the Divine Philosophy, not so much a sacred history. Historical events as such were of no interest and of no importance for him. The Bible was for him just a single book, in which he failed to discern any historical perspective or progress. It was treated by him rather as a collection of glorious parables and didactic stories intended to convey and to illustrate certain philosophical and ethical ideas.

In such an extreme form this allegorical method was never accepted by the Church. One has however to recognise a strong influence of Philo on all exegetical

essays of the first centuries. St. Justin made a large use of Philo. Pseudo-Barnabas (early 2nd century) once went so far as to deny the historical character of the Old Testament altogether. Philonic traditions were taken up by the Christian school of Alexandria. And even later St. Ambrose was closely following Philo in his commentaries and could be justly described as *Philo latinus*. This allegorical exegesis was ambiguous and misleading.

It took a long time before the balance was established or restored. And still one must not overlook the positive contribution of this method. The best exponent of allegorical exegesis in the Church was Origen and his influence was enormous. One may be shocked sometimes by his exegetical daring and licence. He used indeed to read too much of his own into the sacred text. But it would be a grave mistake to describe him as a philosopher. He was first of all and throughout a Biblical scholar, certainly in the style of his own age. He spent days and nights over the Bible. His main purpose was just to base the whole doctrine and the whole theology on a Biblical ground. He was responsible to a great extent for the strength of the Biblical spirit in the whole patristic theology. He did much more for an average believer ; he made the Bible accessible to him. He steadily introduced the Old Testament into his preaching. He helped the average Christian to read and to use the Old Testament for their edification. He always stressed the unity of the Bible, bringing both Testaments into a closer relation. And he made a new attempt to build the whole doctrine of God on a Biblical basis.

Origen's limitations are obvious. But his positive contribution was much greater. And it was he who by his example taught Christian theologians to go back always for their inspiration to the sacred text of Scriptures. His line was followed by most of the Fathers. But he met strong opposition at once. There is no room to dwell at length on the controversy between the two exegetical schools in the Early Church. The main features are commonly known. The Antiochene school stood for

“ history ”, Alexandrinians rather for “ contemplation ”. And surely both elements had to be brought together in a balanced synthesis.

History or Preaching

The main Alexandrian presumption was that, as being Divinely inspired, the Scriptures must carry in them some *universal* message, for all nations and ages. Their purpose was just to exhibit this message, to discover and to preach all these riches of the Divine wisdom which have been providentially stored in the Bible. Beneath the letter of the Holy Writ there are some other lessons to be learned only by the advanced. Behind all human records of manifold revelations of God one can discern the Revelation, to apprehend the very Word of God in all its eternal splendour. It was assumed that even when God was speaking under some special circumstances there was always something in His word that passes all historical limitations. One has to distinguish very carefully between a direct prophecy and what one might describe as an application. Many of the Old Testament narratives can be most instructive for a believer even when no deliberate “ prefiguration ” of Christian truth has been intended by the sacred writers themselves. The main presupposition was that God meant the Holy Writ to be the eternal guide for the whole of mankind. And therefore an application or a standing re-interpretation of the Old Testament was authorised.

The Antiochene exegesis had a special concern for the direct meaning of the old prophecies and stories. The chief exponent of this “ historical ” exegesis was Theodore of Mopsuestia, known in the East simply as “ the Interpreter ”. And although his authority was gravely compromised by his condemnation for his erroneous doctrines, his influence on the Christian exegesis of the Old Testament was still very considerable. This “ historical ” exegesis was often in danger of missing the universal meaning of the Divine Revelation by overemphasis of the local and national aspects of the Old Testament.

And even more, to lose the sacred perspective, to deal with the Old Testament history as if it were merely the history of one single people among the nations of the earth and not a history of the only true Covenant of God.

St. John Chrysostom has combined the best elements of both schools in his exegetical endeavour. He was an Antiochene scholar himself, but he was in many respects a follower of Origen as well. Allegories may be misleading. But one has not to overlook the "typical" meaning of events themselves. Old Testament institutions and personalities were also the "types" or "figures" of the things to come. History was prophetic itself. Events themselves do prophesy, they did and do point out to something else, beyond themselves. The Early Fathers can hardly be described as "fundamentalists". They were always after the Divine truth, after the Divine message itself, which is often rather concealed under the cover of the letter. The belief in Inspiration could rather discourage the fundamentalist tendency. The Divine truth cannot be reduced to the letter even of Holy Writ. One of the best specimens of patristic exegesis was the *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil, who has succeeded in bringing forward the religious truth of the Biblical narrative of the creation with real balance and sound moderation.

The Old Testament and Christian Worship

The patristic attitude towards the Old Testament was reflected in the history of Christian worship. The Jewish roots of Christian Liturgy are obvious. But the whole system of Christian public worship was linked closely to the practice of the Synagogue as well. The Psalms were inherited from the Jews, and they became a pattern of the whole Christian hymnography in the early Church. The Psalms form the skeleton of Christian offices until now. They were the basis of all devotional literature in old days.

The student of public worship in the Eastern Orthodox Church would be impressed by the amount of Old Testament references, hints and images, in all

offices and hymns. The unity of the two Testaments is stressed throughout. Biblical motives are superabundant. Many hymns are but variations on the pattern of the Old Testament songs, from the song of Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea up to the song of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. On great festivals numerous lessons from the Old Testament are appointed and actually read to stress that Christian perfection was but a consummation of what was pre-figured and foreshadowed, or even directly predicted of old. And specially in the offices of Holy Week this Old Testament preparation is particularly emphasized. The whole worship is based upon this conviction that the true Covenant was always one, that there was a complete agreement between the Prophets and the Apostles. And all this system was established just in the later patristic age.

One of the most striking examples of this devotional Biblicism is the glorious *Great Canon* of St. Andreas of Crete, read at the Great Compline in Lent. It is a strong exhortation, an appeal for repentance, composed with a real poetical inspiration and based upon the Bible. The whole series of Old Testament sinners, both penitent and impenitent, is remembered. One can be almost lost in this continuous stream of names and examples. One is emphatically reminded that all this Old Testament story belongs to one as to a Christian. One is invited to think over again and again this wonderful story of Divine guidance and human obstinacy and failures. The Old Testament is kept as great treasure. One has to mention as well the influence which the *Song of Songs* had on the development of Christian mysticism. Origen's commentary on this book was in St. Jerome's opinion his best composition, in which he surpassed himself. And St. Gregory of Nyssa's mystical commentary on the *Song of Songs* is a rich mine of a genuine Christian inspiration.

The Old Testament as the Word of God

It has been more than once suggested that in the Greek Fathers the primitive Christian message was hellenised

too much. One has to be very cautious with all such utterances. In any case it is the Fathers who have kept all the treasures of the Old Testament and made them the indispensable heritage of the Church, both in worship and in theology. The only thing they never did is this : they never kept fast to the Jewish limitations. The Holy Writ for them was an eternal and universal Revelation. It is addressed to all mankind now simply because it was addressed to all nations by God Himself even when the Divine Word was delivered by the prophets to the Chosen People alone. It means that one cannot measure the depth of the Divine Revelation with the measure of some past time only, however sacred those times may be. It is not enough to be sure that the ancient Hebrews understood and interpreted the Scriptures in a certain way. This interpretation can never be final. New light has been thrown on the old revelations by Him Who came just to accomplish and to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. The Scriptures are not merely historical documents. They are really the Word of God, the Divine message to all generations. And Christ Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of the Scriptures, both the climax and the knot of the Bible. This is the standing message of the Fathers to the Church Universal about the Old Dispensation.

The Place of the Old Testament in the Faith of the College Student

KENNETH S. McLENNAN

It is not unusual these days to find the American College student who is quite illiterate about the Bible and especially about the Old Testament. If asked to state where the principles of his faith are to be found he would undoubtedly answer in favor of the New Testament. He would probably add that the Old Testament had little to

do with his faith. He would say that in Jesus' teachings are to be found sufficiency for his faith and Christian living.

Those who have come to appreciate the richness of spiritual resources in the Old Testament would want to qualify this. It is granted that in the New Testament we find what Jesus has to say to us, and that in the gospels and in St. Paul's writings we get an understanding of His life and message, and the implications of what it means to be a Christian. Contained therein are marvelous religious truths, the loftiest ideals, vital glimpses of Christian sacrifice and action. But to the student who truly understands the Bible there comes the thought that these rich treasures we have in the New Testament are like the blossoms of a beautiful bouquet. Each ideal and thought is like a lovely flower. The bouquet is a composite thing of beauty to admire — to take home — to appreciate — to use. Then there comes a time in our experience when we desire to know whence came these blossoms, these beautiful expressions of our faith. We long to see the environment, the source, from which they have sprung. We, desire to go back to the expansive garden, to the wide sweeping fields of history — in which these truths, these ideals, grew.

We find the Old Testament to be such a garden for religious history and faith. There we find in the traditions, the culture, the history of this chosen people of God, the Israelites, the ways in which God has revealed Himself at various times as Creator, and Sustainer, and Sovereign, of all life. The expressions of our faith in the New Testament need to be interpreted in the light of the Old Testament where these ideas took root.

Jesus and the Old Testament

Jesus realized how much He was debtor to the Old Testament Scriptures as a basis for His own faith, and for the sublime truths He uttered. There was no New Testament in His time. The Old Testament books were an important and basic part in His own thinking, and

are still significant today for ours. Practically no saying of Jesus' was entirely original. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time..., but I say unto you..."¹. His originality was in selecting that which was essential and of permanent value and recasting great spiritual truths in His own crucible of thought and pertinent and timely expression. The Ten Commandments which are still basic to the laws by which we are governed came from the Old Testament. These Jesus gathered up with new emphasis in the Great Commandment — "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind"². But this was taken from the Old Testament.³ To this He added "and love thy neighbor as thyself"⁴, and supplemented these with the golden rule, "do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." We find a suggestion for this back in the Apocryphal book of Tobit.⁵

How much more fully do we come to appreciate Jesus Himself as the author and perfecter of our faith in the light of Hebrew history and prophecy. Jesus' life becomes, then, not an isolated event in history — a perfect sculptured piece removed from its native setting. We see Him as the light of the world, shining forth in due time as the climax to man's search for truth, and God's supreme revelation of Himself to man. How much more meaningful these basic truths of our faith become as we understand them against the background from which they were taken.

Why Students do not read the Old Testament

To those of us who have the privilege of sharing with students in their experiences of understanding the great Christian concepts and ideas of faith, there are several reasons apparent why the Old Testament is not read

¹ Matt. v. 20-44. Compare with Ex. xx. 13, 14, 21, 24. Deut. v. 17, 18; xxiv. 1, 3; xxiii. 21; xix. 21. Lev. xix. 12; xx. 20; xix. 18. Num. xxx. 2.

² Luke x. 27. — ³ Deut. vi. 5.

⁴ Luke x. 27; Lev. xix. 18. — ⁵ Tobit iv. 15.

more today and for that reason why it has not had a larger place in their faith.

Many students are not reading the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, because of the manner in which it was taught and interpreted to them as children. As one student stated it, "I am rather lukewarm about the Bible because in my earlier years I was led to believe that it was something which now I know that it is not." Another student said, "before I came to college I believed what was told in the Bible ; but now I doubt that I should believe it." Claims have been made for it that were more than should have been made. Many have been taught that the Bible was all of the same value, all on the same plane of inspiration, and all to be taken literally. Some have claimed for it too complete scientific and historical accuracy. Such claims make it difficult for the student who seeks to reconcile what is taught in the science class room concerning the evolutionary process of creation with certain types of literal interpretation of Genesis ; or the stability and orderly function of our universe with the idea of the sun standing still ; and the law of gravity as over against the description of an iron axe floating on water. A rightful interpretation is needed in the light of the Bible's being an oriental book written in many parts in poetic, picturesque, oriental style to present great spiritual truths. It is a Book of Life, describing real experiences in the light of the understanding of a former day and not always to be taken with modern scientific literalness.

Doubts as to the validity of the Bible have come to some students as they have seen people take a Bible verse to prove an argument, or to give them guidance. Some people have been known to open up a Bible blindfolded and to place a finger at random on whatever place the Bible opened, and to think that God is leading them to do what that particular verse implies. Such practices do violence to a student's intellectual integrity. Students who have come to a reasonable interpretation of the Bible find it necessary to be selective, and to read it

understandingly with the help of some good commentary. They seek to find out who is speaking, and the circumstances under which the message or action takes place, taking each passage in its full context. One difficulty in coming to a true appreciation of the Old Testament is that some Sunday School lesson materials present only fragmentary bits of the Old Testament. It is desirable that it should be read connectedly, or studied as a whole book with the continuity of religious thought unfolded in its onward historical development.

Other students have become disgusted with certain ideas presented in the Old Testament, and do not read it for that reason. They turn away from detailed tedious accounts of bloody wars fought by God's chosen people with His blessing and aid. They see God presented as an anthropomorphic god, vindictive, jealous, and revengeful. It nauseates them to read of children slain by bears at Jehovah's command because these children had ridiculed the great prophet Elisha. There is also, little appreciation of the low moral standards of some of the Old Testament characters, and of the social practices of polygamy, slavery, and human sacrifice mentioned therein. Because such practices are to be found described in the Old Testament devoted believers in peace, and in Jesus' ethics are disturbed and are apt to think there is little of value in the Old Testament for their inspiration, enlightenment, or encouragement, or faith today.

The Case for Old Testament Study

But, as Dr. Eliot Porter points out, "Our religion is history. Nobody sat down and thought it out. It was wrought out through centuries of experience. If we are to understand it we must work mentally through the process."¹ An appreciation of the past makes us aware of the set-backs and strides civilization and religious truth have made. Again, says Dr. Porter, "It can save

¹ Eliot Porter in *Report of Inter Church Student Conference*, Naperville, Ill. Dec. 1938. Page 6.

us from unwarranted despair and enthusiasms. The greatest problems of life are recurring problems that have all been faced in the course of Christianity. Through the pages of history recorded in the Old Testament God has been revealing the strata of developing realization of the will and purpose of God.”² Out of such unfruitful soil and moral degradation was moulded a Nation that believed in One God, and through this God produced the Christ. We must understand Jesus against such a background of history.

Eliot Porter continues by giving four advantages of a knowledge of the Old Testament: “1. Detachment — our own prejudices, desires and problems are seen against the experience of the ages; 2. Loftier expressions of our own experience — ‘I have found my own doubts all expressed in Ecclesiastes — only so much better;’ 3. The validation of our own religious experience; 4. The contagion of the religion presented in the Bible.”³

In the third place, American college students are not reading the Old Testament and letting it influence their faith because they think it is irrelevant to the personal and social problems of today. Many American students are keenly interested in the cause of social justice. They see a world that is full of social, economic, and political evils and are eager to do their part along with other Christian young people to make these areas of impoverishment more Christian and build the Kingdom of God here on earth. To many of these students thinking rather hastily the Old Testament appears to offer little help. If we might paraphrase an old saying, “unfamiliarity with the great social message of the prophets has bred contempt.”

The Social Challenge of the Prophets

How stimulating it is to read the critical analysis of these prophets of their times, and the caustic utterances of these seers of Israel, as they condemn the exploitation

¹ Ibid. — ² Ibid.

of the poor by the wealthy, or as they speak out against idolatry, and social rottenness and immorality of the people, and condemn the nationalistic fervor that leads on to the evil of war. We need to reread frequently these messages of spiritual and social emancipation to quicken our own sensitivity to social and economic injustice. We need to realize anew that God is a God of righteousness and justice, able to bring judgment upon society for its social cruelty. Many times in the Old Testament we see God bring judgment upon a transgressing Israel.

We need to re-examine the formality of worship and church practices of our day when these become removed from the appeal of human need. As we reread Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah, we find indeed a message for our day, that builds our social passion into being a part of God's purpose. With Amos we discover anew the desire "that justice roll down as waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."¹ Where do we find a more challenging call to work for peace than in the words of Isaiah and Micah? "Jehovah will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths... And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall there be war any more."² Hosea, Jonah, and Isaiah, present God as interested in other nations than Israel alone. Here is indeed a call to make "Christus Victor" in our national boundaries and prejudices in this time of international uncertainty and conflict.

The Renewing of Faith

Surely, amid present transition and confusion, there is for the student who seeks inner motivation and stabilizing power that in the Old Testament which will renew his faith in God, in himself and in his fellowman. In Genesis, Job, Isaiah, and in the Psalms, especially, he

¹ Amos v. 24. — ² Is. ii. 3, 4.

can, like Abraham of old, "look now toward heaven and number the stars"¹. He can there get perspective as he realizes the majesty, wonder, and marvelous handiwork of the Creator in the experience of man. He will come to appreciate the eternal, cosmic character of God. Looking at these marvelous Old Testament passages they are like the heavens that "declare the glory of God", and he finds as he reads that he is relieved of certain feelings of inadequacy and frustration at sometimes trying to achieve the "good life" for himself and others through his own strength alone. There comes to him the encouraging word, for example, of the scribe of the Proverbs, echoing out of this man's personal experience with God alone the admonition to "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thy own understanding (alone). In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."² As the student meditates and lets God speak to him through these majestic words he becomes conscious of a feeling of well-being at one with God, a part in His cosmic process, and purpose. He is, as a follower of Christ, no longer attempting to live just a good life, consisting of a series of good deeds, or ethical acts. For now he perceives that he is a part of a great historical, redeeming, healing and integrating process; a questing, enriching, spiritual process in which these Hebrews of the Old Testament made their significant contribution. As the modern college student examines and takes into his thinking these spiritual discoveries and lessons his own horizons are widened, and his own inner resources deepened. The fleeting moments of insight of these religious men of Israel enable the student to recapture his own spiritual and moral certainties. He is lifted from the sense of immediacies into the presence of Ultimate Reality and Purpose.

Even as many Churches have found value in their worship services including readings from both the Old and New Testaments, so also, the student in his de-

¹ Gen. xv. 5. — ² Prov. iii. 5, 6.

votional reading may, also, find inspirations and moral uplift, and guidance as God speaks to him from the whole Bible. It is not a book of magic, or a fetish to be worshipped. It is not enough merely to sing the praises of the Bible, or read books about it. Students who attended the Amsterdam Conference were impressed with the value of group Bible study as a basis for understanding the problems of our day. Its great ideas are clear. Its great principles and truths are especially relevant for our day.

With faith discovered, renewed, and deepened from this garden of the Old Testament, the student can take into the bouquet of his own faith a sense of expectancy, of hope, of God's promises fulfilled and to be fulfilled, not only for men of an age gone by, but also for the pilgrims of today and tomorrow.

The Old Testament and the Christian Life

WILHELM VISCHER

We shall confine ourselves to the essential problem of the significance of the Old Testament for the Christian life. Our main thesis can be formulated as follows:

The essential significance of the Old Testament for the Christian life is based on the statement of the Gospel: Jesus is the Christ of Israel, promised and awaited in the Old Testament, born when the time was fulfilled, crucified under Pontius Pilate and restored from the dead by the power of God, who shall return to judge the living and the dead. This message affirms that Jesus is the head of a body, of which the Old Testament shows us the members, that therefore he does not live for himself, but for his people and in them. This life of Christ Jesus for his people and in them, is itself the Christian life. As Jesus is neither announced nor known as Christ except in relation to the Old Testament, so

the relationship of the life of Jesus to the Old Testament contains within itself the reality of the Christian life.

“Whom do Men say that I am ?”

To clarify the content of these statements, we must remember that it was not only as Christ that Jesus could be understood. The question which He put himself to His disciples at a decisive hour in His life was : “Whom do men say that I am ?” The same question will always receive the same replies, as the Gospels have recorded them for us in their remarkable variety. We know how often today, both outside the Church and within it, in modern guise, men renew all the attempts to understand the life of Jesus as that of a great philosopher, a religious genius, a superman, the founder of a new morality, or quite simply a deeply religious man, or from the other point of view as the life of someone who destroyed the highest values or even, in the last resort, a madman. We take Jesus as the example and champion of the most diverse philosophies from the most conservative to the most revolutionary. All these views of Jesus, in their diversity, have one common characteristic that they consider the life of Jesus as a life lived *alongside* other possible lives, a life from which other men can learn or receive something of greater or less importance, but alongside which in some way or other there exist other sources of life. Gospel preaching separates itself radically from these views of Jesus, when it preaches him as the Christ. For in doing this it proclaims that there is no true life for any man except in so far as he shares in the very life of Jesus.

The name, *Christ*, is indeed a title of special significance. It means “the son of the living God, the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation”. “In him is life, all things have been created through him and unto him, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible, and things invisible, and he is the head of the body, the church.” (Colossians i). The Christ is the

chosen high priest of the people, who has been anointed by God Himself, and whose coming has been announced by all the words of the Old Testament. That is why the New Testament witnesses depend upon the Old Testament. Otherwise they could not announce Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. It is only the reference to the Old Testament which demonstrates and teaches us that He is the Messiah, and what it means to be the Messiah. What then does it mean? It means precisely to be the head of a body, not to have one's own life, unique and incomparable as it is, for oneself but for the members of the body. The Old Testament shows us the members of the body which draw their life from the head and live by Him. The whole body, with all its members, the whole people of the Old Covenant is dead, if Jesus is not, in His capacity as Christ, its Head. All the human movements of which the Old Testament tells us, have their origin in Him and lead to Him. The biographies of all these men form a part of His own biography. That is why in themselves they have so little interest in so far as the description of particular personalities is concerned. All that is said of them is said in fact of Him by whom and for whom they live, as a part of His own biography. That is why the witnesses of Christ Jesus in the New Testament always return to passages in the Old Testament, and declare that such and such an event in the life of Jesus was bound to happen in order that such and such a passage in the Scriptures might be fulfilled. We should be seriously mistaken if we supposed that this was only true of isolated quotations in the so called "Messianic" passages. For the New Testament witnesses the Holy Scripture constitutes a whole. If you touch it at any point the whole vibrates, just as in a living body the slightest touch is transmitted by the nervous system to all the parts.

The Promises of Faith

The Christological exegesis of the Old Testament by the Gospel is not at all a later interpretation of these ancient

writings. Rather the Gospel alone fits in with their original and specific meaning. Any attempt whatever to interpret them otherwise can only result in obscuring them or doing them violence. The attentive reader cannot fail to notice that the stories of the Old Testament all concern the future. They all lead to an end which they have not yet reached. Men arise at the call of God, leave all their possessions, and hasten to a promised goal. The commandments of God which make them act and also lead them into suffering, are none the less promises. He who lays hold on a promise by faith, and allows it to give his life its impetus and direction, according to the Old Testament, is facing in the "right" direction: he is "righteous". The just, in the familiar words, always live by faith. And this is even said in the future: "The just shall live by faith"; so much does the life of the believer draw its reality from the future.

*

Just as the righteous of the Old Covenant live by faith, and for faith, they also die in faith. Hence the importance of their sepulchre. The sepulchres of the fathers and of David are far from being monuments of the past. They are signposts to the future. The covenants by which God has given these men the time and possibility to live, contain in themselves the promise of a new life. That is why the signs of the Covenant, (the rainbow, the circumcision, the passover and the sabbath), are all pledges of the future, sacramental signs of the Kingdom which is coming.

*

Thus Israel lives only by the expectation of Him who is to come. And so it carries in its own being a promise for the whole world. For "in these days", "at the last day", which constitutes the total horizon of the Old Testament, when "the times shall be fulfilled", "that she which travaileth hath brought forth", when "He that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting, shall come forth out of Bethlehem" (Micah v), "the nations shall see the glory which is coming

upon Israel". Thus the Old Testament gives light, from the beginning of the world, to every human birth of the light of Advent, which shines at Christmas. "Your father Abraham", said Jesus to the Jews, "rejoiced to see my day ; and he saw it, and was glad" (S. John viii. 56). That is why the voice of the Bridegroom and of the Bride can never be silent. That is why the Creator has given the commandment, and has never withdrawn it "Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth" (Genesis i. 28).

*

The Servants of the Lord

We do not find in Israel any harmonious religious personality. All strike against "the rock of Israel" and are broken by it. All, like their father Jacob-Israel, have been wounded in the thigh in their struggle with God. They all suffer at the hands of God. It is in the abysses and not upon the summits of their life that they are nearest to God. The strongest amongst them are the most cast down. The "servants of the Lord" whom he has chosen for himself as mediators have "no beauty that we should desire them". They are weary and heavy-laden, unable any longer to sustain their mission. "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written, cried Moses" (Exodus xxvii.32). "Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight ; and let me not see my wretchedness". (Numbers xi.15). Elijah prays : "take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers" (I Kings xix.4), and Jeremiah laments : "Cursed be the day wherein I was born." (Jer. xx.14) "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed ? Wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail ?" None of these servants will see his suffering removed. On the contrary, the burden of God will weigh more heavily upon them. They will learn that it is a greater grace to be able to carry something of the infinite suffering of God. That is their consolation.



The Hope of Israel...

And yet they *live*. In spite of all threats, in spite of punishment and suffering, the supreme judgment is not fulfilled in the Old Testament. The hope of the great *turning-again* extends to all. And it is just those who are condemned and sacrificed who are his most powerful witnesses. Job represents many of them when against all justice he makes his appeal to the *compassion* of the Most High.

“But I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth : and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God : whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job xix.25-27).

When at last God grants to Job, his servant, life, twice as much as he possessed, and, once again, a family, it is the prophetic sign of the great restoration of all things promised to those who now suffer for righteousness' sake.

“The whole creation was subjected to vanity” by God the Holy One in view of this hope (Romans viii.20-21). A victor is promised to Adam, who “shall be born of the seed of the woman, and who shall bruise the head of the serpent”, which has led astray the whole world, and “which accuses the brethren”. The moratorium, which God in his covenant with Noah granted to a world infinitely guilty, announces the possibility of a redemption of the sin committed. Abraham recovers Isaac whom he had surrendered to the king as a token ; for he has not counted in vain on the possibility that God the Almighty can restore men even from death. Each Passover among the children of Israel strengthens them in their hope for a day when once more blood shall be spilt to free them finally from the bondage of this world. Each Sabbath and each Sabbatical year bears witness that once again the great year of jubilee shall come and the day of the eternal feast

begin, when all creatures shall sing to the glory of their Creator and Redeemer. Israel introduced into the world a great unrest, and it is its own possession, in which it must march as a stranger across the centuries and the nations, without finding on this earth a settled home. And this unrest has its origin and end in the fact that the children of God must find their home with the eternal Father, and that with them all the groaning and travail of creation shall find their rest in God the Lord. The destiny of the chosen people shows that God Himself has become an exile and a stranger from His own earth, that He returns "incognito" in His creation, that He dwells thereafter among His enemies until He has triumphed over them in His love. The Lord makes Himself a servant, and takes sin upon Him. Do not the countless thousands of sacrifices offered by Israel announce the unique sacrifice which God Himself must offer, so that sinners may live before Him.

'Thou hast been weary of me O Israel...

Thou hast made me to serve with my sins,

Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions
for thine own sake ; and I will not remember thy sins.'

(Isaiah xliii.23-25.)

The Holy One would take upon Him the sin of the world that the world may live. To manifest this He has chosen Israel. This people is His servant, called to a priestly service. And in spite of all its infidelities, it perseveres in its holy function, for the love of Him who, right in the midst of guilty men, Himself the only one who is sinless, takes upon Himself the sins of all and offers Himself as a sacrifice for them. The transformation by grace of the judgment of God must be manifested in Israel. That is why it is led into hell and is drawn out again. That is why there is always "a remnant" which passes from sin into righteousness, from death to life. That is why the lamp which the Lord has lit in the house

of David, in spite of all the sins and all the punishments of that house, is never completely extinguished.

★

...is in Jesus Christ

The good news that, by the birth of Jesus Christ, Son of Abraham and Son of David, every believer receives the possibility and the right of living by grace, the Gentile as well as the Jew, this Gospel appeared to the Jews to be a break with the Old Testament. The Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul show us how much difficulty even the members of the first Christian communities had in admitting that through Jesus Christ the barrier between Jews and other men had been broken down. And yet the good news that all the peoples of the world are pardoned for life through the Christ of Israel is in truth the fulfilment of the Old Testament. For neither Abraham nor Israel were called by God for themselves. From the beginning it has been clearly said that everything God has done to His chosen ones must minister to the salvation of the world and for the justification of His patience by which, in spite of the sin of Adam, He grants to men the gift of life, renews it for them and sustains it without end. Now He is born who is the Hope of Israel and who thus gives to all who believe the right to life.

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We must not therefore think that Jesus came to abolish the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets. He came not to abolish, but to fulfil. By His very self, by His life, His death, and resurrection, He fulfils them. He offers the sacrifice by which this becomes true and real, the great sacrifice of *Love* in which God lays hold upon the world. Thus He has brought to light the pardon of which the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were the signs. In showing by His unique sacrifice the creative work of pardon He removes the need for provisional signs. In

loving sinners, in the name of God and as Son of God, and in loving God, as Son of Man and in the name of sinners, He reveals and fulfils the unique commandment of life, which is present in all the commandments ; for the commandment of life is the commandment to love God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law and the prophets." In these two phrases we have the content of the Old Testament, and the content of these two phrases is Jesus Christ Himself. God wills that we should love him, and that, through that love, we should have communion of life one with another. That is the unfathomable love in which He exists, not for Himself alone, but for us and with us. "Emmanuel", God with us in Jesus Christ. That is the Christian life ; the participation in the life of Jesus Christ that we may be taken up in the love of the Father for His Son, and in the Love of the Son for His Father, and that we may love one another as brethren, as He loved us.

It is as members of the ancient world that the appeal of the Gospel reaches us, although the Old Testament is now fulfilled and we can await and hasten towards the coming of Our Lord in glory. As long as time endures, and the message of the Gospel is spread abroad in the world, all those who would live the Christian life must listen to the Word of the Old Testament, that they may learn from it to live in repentance, in rejection of the old world, and, in conversion to the new, in faith, in love and in hope, in justice, holiness and wisdom which are in Jesus Christ. Thus shall we learn the true wisdom of life, for such are the "Sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. iii.15), and which in their inexhaustible riches show us the unique possibility of the true life, of the life through grace, through the gracious love of God in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Three Studies in the Book of Jeremiah¹

SUZANNE DE DIETRICH

I

The word of the Lord came...

(A study in Jeremiah chapter I; see also xii. 1-6; xv. 10-21; xx.)

When the Lord speaks...

"The words of Jeremiah... to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah... in the thirteenth year of his reign... unto the eleventh year of Zedekiah... in the fifth month". (Jer. i. 1-3)

A prophet, according to the book of Jeremiah, is *a man to whom the word of God comes*: nothing less and nothing more; because there can be nothing more than this: God breaking in, in space and time, stepping into history and making Himself heard.

God's Word is no abstraction; when God speaks, it is never to make some general statement on the nature of God and man — this He leaves to human philosophers; God speaks to a situation. His word comes to Jeremiah "during the reign of Josiah, in the thirteenth year". Each word of God is a breaking in of the Eternal into the temporal, like lightning which strikes one spot and no other.

And if what God said to Jeremiah 2500 years ago comes to you and me as a word of God today, it can only come, not as a piece of philosophy of history but as a concrete word spoken to our situation in 1939.

¹ These studies were presented at the Nunspeet Conference in August 1939; we have somewhat revised and completed them, especially in their historical part. Most of the practical conclusions have been left as they stood. S. DE D.

The prophetic word deals *with history* ; not with history as men see it but with history as God makes it : " The Lord Jahweh never does anything without telling his servants the prophets. When the lion roars, who does not shudder ? When the Lord Jahweh speaks, who can but prophesy ? " (Amos iii. 7-8). These words of Amos state the fundamental character of all prophecy : God acts. God rules. And the prophet is appointed to tell about God's deeds.

A generation ago, Old Testament scholars took great pains to explain that a prophet was not, as popular language would have it, a kind of national fortune-teller, forecasting future events ; but rather a man entrusted by God with a message about and to his own time. There is a great element of truth in such a statement, but those who made it were not always free from certain rationalistic preconceptions, namely that to read into the future would be a supernatural gift, while to interpret the present only calls for enlightened commonsense ! — But the Biblical perspective is a totally different one. For what prophecy deals with is the *hidden meaning of history*. History is not a mere succession of events ; through history God achieves His redeeming purpose. Prophecy is history seen in a " metahistorical ", — in God's perspective : the perspective of His oncoming Kingdom. This secret history only God knows, — and those to whom it pleases Him to reveal it, — His servants the prophets. It is true that even when the prophet talks about future events, his concern is with the present : his aim is not to satisfy human curiosity but to convert his people *here and now* by sharing with them God's promises and God's warnings.

The God in whose name the prophet speaks is the God for whom " a thousand years are like one day ". The day and the morrow are equally veiled to our blind human eyes as long as we live on the surface of events. The prophet is a man to whom God reveals the things that are as over against outward appearances ; and in these things that are, the seeds of future doom are contained, yet hidden to all but God's eyes.

We cannot escape the fact that Amos announced Israel's doom while Israel was still a flourishing kingdom ; and thirty years later, Israel was gone. A century later, Jeremiah spoke the word of doom on the kingdom of Judah. And in his very lifetime Judah was gone.

No visitor to Palestine can escape the mystery of prophecy fulfilled : it faces one at every turning of the road.

“ I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations ”...

“ I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to overthrow ; to build, and to plant ” (Jer. i. 6, 10).

God's Word is *action*. What God says, He does. Only if we understand this do we understand the full meaning of a prophet's calling ; the kind of awe of a prophet standing before God and again the kind of awe the true prophet awakens in those who listen to him, whether they accept him or not. For when the prophet speaks, things happen.

“ I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them ” (Jer. v. 14)...

“ Is not my word like a fire ? saith the Lord ; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock to pieces ? ” (xxiii. 29)

If kings and priests feared the prophet of God, loathed him inwardly and yet laid hands on him only with reluctance, it is because they did believe that his words would take effect ; these were no mere words ; they carried with them God's curse or God's benediction ; they destroyed and built ; they uncovered God's secret designs. Indeed, no one can stand against the prophet if God is with him. If the nation does not listen to his warning, his very words will precipitate judgment upon it. For his words are power and might.

Let us not wonder at Jeremiah's being aghast at the very thought of such a vocation. If a prophet did not tremble, it would mean indeed that he had been “ dreaming dreams ” (Jer. xxiii. 25-29) and had not really “ stood in the Lord's council ” and heard His voice.

Jeremiah hears God's voice ; he knows what it means and he trembles. Most men of God have known this

struggle : Moses pleads he cannot speak ; Isaiah feels lost until the charcoal burns his lips ; Jeremiah starts pleading : " Ah but, Lord Jahweh, I cannot speak. I am too young ! " And the stern answer comes : " Say not, I am too young ; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak "... (i. 7).

The Lord's Choice

" Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak : for I am a child ! "

The prophet of God is not a kind of religious genius who has peculiar spiritual insights and stands ahead of his time in his apprehension of the divine. The Bible knows of no qualification of this kind. Jeremiah's first reaction to God's call could be translated like this : " Please, Lord God, let me alone ! Call another ! some wise man who will know what he is talking about ! "

No, the prophet of God is no scholar in earthly wisdom. The God who one century earlier took Amos behind his flock of sheep and sent him straight to the royal sanctuary at Bethel now picks out a boy from a family of priests in the hamlet of Anathoth : What good things might come from Anathoth ? Why this boy rather than another ? — By no merits of thine, is the answer ; for I appointed thee before thou wast born.

In others words : God's choices are God's choices ; His good pleasure laughs at our piled up wisdom. All our earthly wisdoms are merely rattling noises which prevent us from hearing the One Voice which counts.

Who is this man whom God has chosen among all men to make him his stronghold and his watchman among the nations ? A naturally strong man ? No. That God chose Jeremiah and called just him to be a " tower of strength " among the nations, a " bronze wall ", rather shows God's paradoxical way of dealing with men !

Our time is deeply imbued with psychological considerations ; we think a lot about people's natural gifts,

about *temperaments*. As far as we can see, Jeremiah was not in the least the kind of stuff we human beings would think of for making a prophet with. The dominant trait of his character seems to have been exquisite sensitiveness ; he has nothing of the sternness of an Amos or a John the Baptist ; this man whom God forbids to marry, (Jer. xvi. 2), who knows of no home and finally of no homeland, describes the blessings of home life and peace as no other has done : the joy of the bride and bridegroom, the sounds of the millstone, the light of the lamp are the familiar images which come naturally to his mind as the very symbols of happiness. His heart breaks at the thought of the suffering of Jerusalem ; of Rachel "weeping over her children and refusing to be consoled because they are not."

Indeed is not this man anything but a man made of steel or bronze ? Why did God choose just this soul athirst for human tenderness to bring to his people a message of doom ? Why are two of the greatest fighters of God's battles in the Old and New Testament, namely Jeremiah and St. Paul, two men of exceptional sensitiveness and intensity of feeling ? Perhaps because to speak God's word they had to share in God's sufferings ! But also because God's grace is enough ; because God's strength speaks through human weakness ; because God the Almighty can make chaff into iron if he pleases. God does not care about our temperaments and gifts. The divine potter can make his pots of any clay. The only thing which matters is for the clay to be in the hands of the potter.

A tremendous thought : God can make use of any material. He can make of you and me a tower of iron if he choses to. Nothing we are and are not matters ; what matters is to give ourselves over *into his hand, in obedience and faith*.

A Wake Tree and a Cauldron

God plays fair with his children : from the beginning, He tells Jeremiah that the game will be hard. And He

starts him with a promise and a warning. This He does through two signs : the almond tree and the boiling cauldron.

The almond tree, which blossoms when winter still covers the earth, is the symbol of watchfulness : " for I am wakeful over my word, to carry it out ". The Lord is faithful ; what He promises, He keeps.

The boiling cauldron is a sign of the doom which awaits the kingdom of Judah ; from the north shall evil come on all nations of the earth.

And the training starts, steady and stern. God knows his Jeremiah ! God knows that he will shrink back more than once. We shall see him kick against the pricks, breaking out in storms of wrath and dismay ; sometimes because the Lord hits too hard ; sometimes because His ways seem to slow, and His prophet resents being accused of talking nonsense !

(Jeremiah :) " Thou art always in the right, O Jahweh,
when I complain to thee ;
yet I would argue this with thee.

Why do bad men prosper ?
why are scoundrels secure and serene ?

Thou plantest them and they take root,
they flourish, yes and they bear fruit !

Thou art always on their lips but far from
their hearts.

O Jahweh, thou knowest me,
hast proved how true is my heart to thee ;
drag them away like sheep to the slaughter,
reserve them for their day of doom ".

(God :) " If you have run with men of foot and they
have tired you out,
then, how can you keep up with horses"?
(xii. 1-3, 5) ¹.

¹ Quoted from Moffat's version.

In other words : " This is only the beginning of the race ! Tired already ? "

(Jeremiah :) " Alas my mother ! you have borne me to
clash and quarrel with all the world ! "

*

" O, thou, Jahweh, God of hosts,
I never joined the jesting band, I never
rioted ;
I sat alone under thy hand, sharing all thine
indignation.
Why, then, do I suffer ceaselessly, why does
my wound fester ?
Wilt thou really disappoint me like a stream
that runs dry ?

(God :) If you will give up murmuring, I will restore
you to my service ;
if you will purify yourself from passion's
dross, then you will be my spokesman.
Let other men come over to your side, but
go not over to join them."
(Jer. xv. 10-21.)

The prophet's battle is God's battle ; no giving in is allowed. God's truth is at stake. The prophet must stand alone. Alone with God.

Here he stands, no more in the village of Anathoth but in the very city of Jerusalem, in the court of the Temple. The priest in charge strikes him and puts him in the stocks. The next day, he releases him and Jeremiah prophesies both the city's destruction and the priest's exile and death. But then — then suddenly, the prophet's heart breaks :

" Cursed be the day when I was borne,
unblessed the day my mother bore me !

Cursed the man who told my father, crying :
a son is born to you and giving him joy.

*

Jahweh, thou didst persuade me
 and I let myself be persuaded !
 Thou wast too strong for me.
 I had to yield.
 Now all day long I am a laughing stock :
 men all deride me,
 for uttering Jahweh's word day after day.
 I am haunted and insulted.
 If I say " I will not mention it,
 I will not speak in his name any more,"
 then I feel within me as it were a fire that burns
 my very being.

I am tired of this,
 so tired I cannot bear it any longer ;
 at my turn I am in terror,
 for I hear many whispering,
 " Denounce him ! let us denounce him ! "
 My friends are on the watch for a false step.
 Perhaps they whisper, he will make a slip,
 and then we have him, then for our revenge !
 Ah, but I have Jahweh on my side,
 a dread and doughty champion !
 My persecutors shall collapse and miss their aim ;
 bitter shall be their shame over their failure ;
 A lasting show to them, never to be forgotten.
 (xx. 14-15 ; 7-11)

The man of God knows of dark hours. " I am tired of this ; so tired I cannot bear it any longer "... " My friends watch for a false step ". We are reminded of another plot, in the Temple of Jerusalem six centuries later.

The Word of God raises against itself all the passions of men ; priests, kings and people rally to silence the troublesome voice... " Denounce him, let us denounce him ! My friends are on the watch for a false step ".

The story is twenty five centuries old. And it rings as if it were written today. Today too, the preaching of the word of God can lead men to jail and concentration camps. And this will go on until the end of time. " For the Word of

God is a living thing, active and more cutting than any sword with double edge, penetrating to the very division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, scrutinizing the very thoughts and conceptions of the heart".¹ This is why the Word of God is feared; feared by those who hear it; feared by the prophet who holds the two-edged sword; for it also cuts deep into his own heart. And he stands himself all along under the judgment he is to proclaim.

A prophet is a man who stands *before God for his people, and before his people for God*. There lies the tension of his calling: — He is God's servant; he is one and yet not one with his people. He is consumed with the fire of God's wrath and of God's love for His people; "O my heart, my heart, it writhes! Oh how it throbs! My soul is moaning, I cannot hold my peace, for I hear the blare of the trumpets and the battle-cry. Crash upon crash!" (iv. 19). He would keep silent, but he cannot: "If I say I will not speak there is within me a burning fire". This is the very essence of all prophetic calling: "God help me! I cannot otherwise!"² God's fire of justice and love burns inside the prophet's heart: "my very soul thrills at thy word for I belong to thee" (xv. 16).

It has often been said that with Jeremiah we saw the beginning in Hebrew tradition of *personal religion*. This saying may be very misleading. Certainly nowhere in the Bible are there more living dialogues than those between the Lord and his prophet. Certainly the prophet who has to speak the word of judgment and the word of deliverance has first to stand under this word himself. He is himself a sign among his people. But he is *a sign*. The book is not concerned with Jeremiah's soul and Jeremiah's feelings: the book is concerned with Jeremiah's message. A mighty word has been spoken, a word of doom, a word of deliverance.

Jeremiah, mocked, scourged, finally dragged out of

¹ Hebrews 4: 12. — ² Luther.

the city into exile is a *sign* among his people. A sign which already points to the One who is to come, the One of whom the High priest will say : " It is your interest that one man should die for the people ". ¹

II

The Word which came to Jeremiah: a Word of Judgment

(See mainly Jeremiah *chapt. ii, vii, xxiii, xxv, xxxiv, xxxvii.*)

Crash upon Crash!

To grasp the meaning of Jeremiah's message we have to retrace briefly the historical background of his ministry. As we said before, a prophet always speaks " to a situation " and can only be fully understood in the light of that situation.

The seventh century B.C. presents us with a dramatic page of world history. Three great Empires struggle for power : Assyria, Egypt and Babylon. The little surrounding nations are drawn into the struggle as in a cyclone. Blind to the incoming danger they go on quarrelling between themselves or intriguing with one side or the other until they fall a prey to their big neighbours ; they become tributary states at the best ; some of them face deportation and enslavement. This had already been the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel a century earlier and Judah had escaped only by a miraculous deliverance (701) ; but the lesson was lost on the kingdom of Judah and it did not " change its ways ". It was Jeremiah's heavy fate to foresee the impending doom. His ministry begins in the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign, in 626, and stretches over 40 years until the second deportation in 586. Until Josiah's death in 608, the kingdom lives in relative peace ; Jeremiah's mes-

¹ S. John xi. 50.

sage is a call to repentance ; disaster can still be avoided. From 608 onwards world events move swiftly ; Josiah is killed at Meggido ; his kingdom becomes in fact a vassal state of Egypt ; Nineveh is destroyed in 607 and this marks the end of the Assyrian Empire ; Egypt is defeated by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 and Babylon establishes its domination in Palestine ; in 598 Jehoiakim attempts to rebel ; in 597 the flower of Judah is deported ; after the revolt of king Zedekiah the second deportation takes place in 586, and this is the end of the kingdom of Judah.

We are told that Jeremiah dictated his prophecies to Baruch under the reign of Jehoiakim (604) and how the king threw them in the fire leaf by leaf (see Jer. chapt. xxxvi and xlv). ¹

Forsaking her first Love !

The second chapter of Jeremiah opens with the pleading of the Lord Jahweh with His people :

“ I remember your early devotion, the love of your
bridal days,

How through the wilds you followed me, through
lands unsown ”...

“ Can a girl forget the trinkets, or a bride her sash ?

And yet my people have forgotten me, days without
number ”.

(Jer. ii. 1, 32)

God's pleading is the pleading of *offended love*. Israel's chief sin is ungratefulness. This is the key-note of Jeremiah's pleading ; it is really the key-note of all prophetic writings, the key-note of all biblical accusations against the people of God. The real foundation of Jahweh's relation with His People is not, as is often believed, a Law, a Code, but a living relationship, a Covenant based

¹ Jeremiah then dictates “ a second edition ” if I may say so ; one of the difficulties of his book is that his sayings have not been kept in chronological order ; some of the earlier prophecies seem to have been developed later so that in many cases the chronological order cannot be restored with any certainty.

on trust and love : on the *saving acts of God*. Jahweh is the faithful God who brought His people from Egypt's land, "through a land of steps and holes, through a land of drought and darkness deep". Jahweh's pleading is not the pleading of a scornful Judge but of a passionate Lover who tries to win back the lost heart of the beloved. God's redeeming action always stands first in Biblical Revelation ; it is of the saving God and because He is the saving God that He commands ; the commandments spring out of the holiness of His love. The chastening discipline He imposes on His people is a consequence, never a precondition of His love. It is because "Israel was set apart for Jahweh" that she will have to answer for what the prophet calls her "prostitutions". Amos struck the same note :

" You alone, of all men, have I cared for ;
therefore I will punish you for all your misdeeds."
(Amos iii. 2)

God's People in the Old Testament, God's Church in the New Testament, are a creation of his redeeming love, called to stand as a sign of this love among the nations. " I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I come to thee and I will move thy candlestick out of its place." (Revel. ii. 4-5). These words of the Seer of Patmos to the Angel of the church at Ephesus might sum up Jeremiah's message to Israel : God's calling and blessing *can be withdrawn*. This is the very thing Israel had never faced ; it belonged to Jahweh and Jahweh belonged to it ; it could leave Jahweh and go after foreign gods, Jahweh would never leave it ! His name was for ever on the holy city ; His angels would for ever protect His temple and His nation.

Jeremiah's first task is therefore to destroy Judah's *false sense of security*.

This false sense of security seems to have grown out of the very deliverance the kingdom of Judah had ex-

perienced a century earlier. Of this deliverance Isaiah had been the poet and the prophet ; his call to repentance was soon forgotten but the conviction that Sion was impregnable took hold of the people. God would protect Jerusalem whatever happened: had not He done so once?

Others, yes, may be destroyed... not ourselves !

During King Josiah's reign, in Jeremiah's very lifetime, Judah even enjoyed a spiritual revival: the book of Deuteronomy was discovered in the Temple, God's law solemnly read and proclaimed. The king started a great religious reform. What mighty reasons to feel spiritually safe !...

And here comes the troublesome prophet: sapping Judah's confidence at its very root ; a crash of thunder in a still blue sky. He does not take Jahweh's protection for granted ; he does not take the temple's holiness for granted ; indeed, he takes nothing for granted, not even the piety of the pious. Where all say : " Peace ", he forecasts doom ! Why ?...

Leaky Cisterns

Why ? because his people have turned away from the Living God and " hewn out cisterns for themselves, leaky cisterns that can hold no water " (Jer. ii. 12-13). What are these leaky cisterns ? a religion which contents itself with outward signs of piety but makes for no change of heart ; rulers who " build their house on unrighteousness " (xxii. 13) ; prophets who " speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord " (xxiii. 16). The hearts of the people are given to idol-worship ; they run after foreign gods ; their lips speak treachery, their hands are stained with blood. And yet they declare : " I have not sinned " ! (ii. 35) ; yet they claim to be religious ! Yet they love to say : " the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord ! " and feel " quite safe " (Jer. vii).

What Jeremiah denounces in Israel's religion is exactly what Jesus will denounce six centuries later : Israel's heart has turned away from the Living God, from the

Fountain of living water. Its religion has gone stale. There and in no outward circumstances lies the reason for its oncoming doom.

"I spoke unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: therefore will I do unto the house which is called by my name, wherein ye trust and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh"... (Jer. vii. 14).

"See, your House is left to you desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 38).

God is not bound. He is not bound to any City or Nation, to any Temple or institution. He is ever free to walk out.

It is the ever-recurring temptation of any religious community to deal with God as if God belonged to it; to make Him its possession. But the Church belongs to God, not God to the Church. There is no outward guarantee of God's presence.

"Listen to my voice and I will be your God". We may speak of Him eloquently; we may pray to Him; and yet our first love may be dead, our deeds betray our words and God may be gone.

He does not walk out at once; and this is why Jeremiah's message is a relentless call to repentance. But the prophet also knows that a time may come when there will be no going back.

"The very stork of the air knows when to migrate, the dove, the swift, the crane keep to the time of their coming; but my people never heed Jahweh's ruling" (viii. 7).

Nature obeys the laws of Creation; it is mankind's peculiar gift that it *can* break the Lord's ruling; that the way of life and the way of death are open before it and that it can choose death.

Israel is dangerously inclined to rely on past mercies; but God may any time reject the instrument of his choice:

"I went down to the potter's house. He was at work with his wheel; and whenever a vessel he was making got

spoiled in his hands, he remoulded it to please himself, till he was satisfied. Then Jahweh's word came to me : " O House of Israel, cannot I do to you as this potter does ? Why, as the clay is in the potter's hands, so you are in my hands " (xviii. 1-10), " I will break this people and this city just as one breaks a potter's jar "... (xix. 11).

This is what Jeremiah proclaims ruthlessly in the Court of the Temple. No wonder the high priest puts him in the stocks (xx. 3). The same conflict between prophet and priest has occurred more than once in Hebrew history (cf. Amos vii. 10-17 ; Jer. xxvi. 17-18).

But the prophet's voice cannot be silenced : " amend your ways and your doings and obey the voice of the Lord your God "... " as for me, behold, I am in your hand " (Jer. xxvi. 13-14). Only thanks to the princes and people in whom respect for the prophet as Jahweh's Voice is still alive, does Jeremiah escape death. The State here acts as the protector of the living Church, as over against the stultified official priestly institution.

In the Melting Pot

" They choose to ignore me "... " therefore " — the Lord of hosts declares — " I must cast them in the melting pot : for how can I overlook my people's crimes ? " (ix. 7).

We often oppose God's justice and God's love as if they were two contrasting aspects of His reality. Nothing is more misleading : for God's justice only reveals the holiness of his love. Judgment is the ultimate expression of God's love where other means have failed ; it is the purifying through fire. That such a judgment and purification had become *unavoidable* makes the sternness of Jeremiah's message.

" For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto me : Take the cup of the wine of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and reel to and fro, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand "... (Jer. xxv. 15-17).

In the years 608-597, world events move with amazing swiftness ; Empires rise, Empires fall, little nations are swept away. To the prophet this is a time of judgment he has long foreseen ; but those who seem to be the masters of the hour are only tools in the Lord's hand ; " I will send unto Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, *my servant* " (xxv. 9). Resistance is useless and repentant acceptance of the nation's doom is the only way out. For He who chastises is also mighty to deliver ; but to revolt would be vain ; and there will be a time of proving and waiting from which there is no escape. Submitting to Jahweh's judgment is the precondition of any recovery. This is why, after the first deportation, Jeremiah sends words of exhortation and hope to the captives while he has nothing but words of doom for those who are left in Jerusalem, for an unrepenting king and his foolish advisors (cf. Jer. chap. xxiv. 29). This is why he walks across the city, a yoke of thong and bars on his neck : thus will Judah and the neighbouring nations be brought under the yoke of Babylon ! Those who yield willingly will survive ; those who revolt against the yoke shall perish ! — Here a conflict occurs between Jeremiah and another prophet called Hananiah. Hananiah announces the comforting news which will please the people : the Lord will soon break the yoke and bring back the captives ! And to prove this, he breaks the yoke on Jeremiah's neck. — Jeremiah walks away... and comes back with an iron yoke (Jer. chap. xxviii).

In this short story the true nature of prophecy appears: its utterances are not to please man but to please God. What the prophet is told, he must say, to the peril of his life (cf. Jer. xxiii. 21-32). "Is not my word like a fire ? saith the Lord ; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ? "

And really, Jeremiah's words fall like a heavy hammer on the besieged city. No mercy for those who deal treacherously ! No hope for them and no escape ! — A typical instance of the prophet's attitude is his conflict with the authorities about the freed slaves (Jer. chap. xxxiv).

"Since you would not obey me and proclaim freedom, each to his brother and fellow, I now proclaim you free, says Jahweh — free to fall under the sword, the pestilence and the famine!" (xxxiv. 17). No mercy for the merciless!... No mercy for those who have broken their pledged word!...

A bit of pottery recently found in Lakhish bears testimony to this most tragic period of the prophet's life: it is a fragment of military correspondence mentioning Baruch and Jeremiah by name and calling the latter "the man who weakens the soldiers' arms". In the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Jeremiah we see the accusation of being a traitor definitely brought against him (xxxvii. 11-16).

Was he? that a man who preaches surrender to the people of a besieged city should be looked upon as most undesirable and accused of falling away to the enemy is not surprising. Any man in the same position would face the same fate, and perhaps more quickly than he did. But we must look at his motives.

Some people have seen in Jeremiah the forerunner of pacifism, the prophet standing for non-violence. This seems to us a complete anachronism; nothing is more foreign to Jeremiah's mind than modern theories of non-resistance. His perspective is a different one: Israel is God's elect nation; it has incurred His wrath and judgment. God is not mocked. There is no escape from his decisions. Israel is to return *to God*. And because there is no sign of such a return, the cup must be drunk to the bottom, — as a last means of salvation.

Jeremiah is thrown into an empty cistern and saved from cruel death only by the mercy of an Ethiopian servant. All his efforts to save his king remain vain. All his efforts to retain his fellowcountrymen from flying into Egypt remain vain; until he is himself dragged into exile against his will. Respected by the enemy, distrusted and hated by his countrymen, he remains to the end a tragic figure — but of him too it can be said: "like one who saw the King invisible, he never flinched".¹

¹ Hebr. xi. 27, Moffatt's translation.

III

The Word which came to Jeremiah: a Word of Hope*(Jeremiah chapt. xxxi, xxxii.)**A Purchase-Deed*

Where all feel safe, the prophet forecasts doom ; where all despair the prophet hopes and speaks the word of consolation.

While Jeremiah was a prisoner in the guard house of the palace, during the siege, he was offered an opportunity to buy his uncle's land at Anathoth ; and he bought it ("for two pounds and seven shillings"). And he charged Baruch to take the deeds and put them in an earthen jar, that they may last "for many a long day". "For, says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, the time will come when houses and land, and vineyards shall again be bought in this country." (Jer. xxxii. 15)

This prophetic action, so typical of our prophet, is meant, more than any words could do, to convey his unbreakable faith in Israel's resurrection. There is no safe cause where God is not ; but there is no lost cause as long as God is God. God may chasten but not forsake for ever the children of his love.

We have already seen that Jeremiah's message to the captives in Babylon was one of hope : "Pray unto me and I will hearken unto you... And I will be found by you" (xxix. 12-14). God's purpose is "one of weal, not of woe" : "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love : therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again will I build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel : again shalt thou be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry"... (xxxii. 3-4) ¹.

But the deliverance to come will not be only a restor-

¹ Some of these fragments refer to the Northern Kingdom and may go back to Jeremiah's early prophecies.

ation of the past : a new hope and a new promise dawn in the prophet's utterances : "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah"... "I will put my law within them and in their heart will I write it ; and I will be their God and they shall be my people ; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (Jer. xxxi. 33-34).

This is Jeremiah's Gospel. — We enter a new realm, the realm of God's incoming kingdom, when a new covenant will be sealed in the hearts of men ; a covenant based on the revelation of God's love, on free forgiveness of sins.

And a prince will come : of their own blood ; he will be allowed to stand in God's presence ; for how else could one dare to enter His presence ?... (xxx. 21). ²

The prophet, on the day he was called, was called to tear up, to break down, to build up and to plant. The tearing up and breaking down of his people he has seen with his own eyes ; the planting and building up he will see in faith.

Faith pierces the future ; it knows that the ultimate victory is God's. And the very hour when human hearts despair is the hour when the faithful cling to God's promises with a strong and firm heart.

"Until the Day dawn"...

"Ye do well that ye take heed (of the word of prophecy) as unto a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." (II Pet. i. 19).

Jeremiah's faith is truly a lamp that shineth in dark-

² We are aware that many scholars ascribe this beautiful passage to a later date.

ness, announcing the Day which is to come : the Day of the Lord, which both in Old Testament and in New Testament teaching is at the same time a Day of Judgment and a Day of Deliverance.

His book helps us to see the deep unity of the two Testaments as well as certain contrasts between them.

The Old Testament announces the New in two ways : by the premises contained in its message and by deeds, — shall we say “*prophetic events*” ? — which point as so many “*signs*” toward the things which are to come.

Jeremiah, by his very calling, by his sufferings, by the opposition he faces, announces the Suffering Servant who is to come ; some have seen in him the figure which inspired Isaiah liii. This may be true or not. But it is not without reason that some of the people, asked who Jesus was, answered : “*Jeremiah*” (Matt. xvi. 14). Chased from his home-village of Anathoth as Jesus will be chased from Nazareth ; burning with zeal for the Lord’s House which men have made into a “*den of robbers*” (Jer. vii. 11, cf. John ii. 16-17, Mark xi. 17) ; denounced by his own (Jer. xii. 6), bound to proclaim struggle where others proclaim peace (Jer. vi. 14, cf. Luke xii. 51) ; scourged, mocked, several times threatened with death, finally dragged out of the City into exile and probably ending in martyrdom, Jeremiah’s solitary figure, as indeed no other in the Old Testament, points to the Cross.

At the same time, his message points to the deliverance which is to come. The Lord Himself will open a way of salvation ; Israel’s rejection will not last for ever ; a new covenant will be written, not on stone and parchment, but on the hearts of men ; “*not like the old one, which they brake*”, but one which will cover all their past sins.

What Jeremiah sees in a still dim future is the coming of the kingdom of God ; of the promised time when all shall know the Lord (xxx. 34). To this time all prophets have looked forward, taking hold firmly of things unseen.

This waiting for the Day of the Lord is a *common feature* of the Old and the New Testament. Prophets and

Apostles alike wait for the ultimate fulfilment of the great Promises which shine as lamps in the darkness all through prophetic and apostolic writings : for the coming of the Day when God will be " all in all " (I Cor. xv. 28), and " death shall be no more " (cf. Rev. xxi. 1-5).

And yet ? is there no difference between the waiting of the prophet and the waiting of the apostle ? On both sides the same faith takes hold of " things not seen " (Hebr. xi. 1). But between these two moments of history an event has taken place : the Word has become flesh, the Cross has been planted on earth, the Prince of Life is risen from the dead and stands before the presence of God. " Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." And Israel has broken the boundaries of race and soil and become the Church of God.

What difference does this make to our faith ? The most concrete way of showing this is perhaps to come back to a parallel we traced at the beginning of these studies between two of the greatest figures of the Old and the New Testament : Jeremiah and St. Paul.

There are striking similarities between them : similarity of vocation (Jer. i. 5-10, cf. Gal. i. 15-16), similarity of character, — this extreme sensitiveness we stressed before (I Cor. ii. 3-5 ; II Cor. xi-xii), similarity of sufferings, — the burning love for their nation, the manifold persecutions they both had to undergo. And yet, what a difference in tone !

Nothing is more enlightening than to compare the passages where Jeremiah bursts into passionate anger against his persecutors, or curses the day when he was born with the letters Paul in jail writes to his churches. " Even if my life blood has to be poured... I rejoice, and you must rejoice with me " (Phil. ii. 17).

This is no difference in character ; but an *event* has taken place : Christ's death and resurrection ; and this event means grace, peace, joy to the believer ; a grace, a peace, a joy no earthly power can destroy, — for who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? " Death is swallowed up in victory ".

What the prophet dimly saw in the distance, holding on by the grace of faith and obedience, the apostle lives day by day as an actual and activating reality : *Christus Victor!*

"Blessed are the eyes that see what you see ! For I tell you, many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, but they have not seen it, and to hear what you hear but they have not heard it ! " (Luke x. 24).

Conclusion

The Relevance of Jeremiah's Message for our Day

Has Jeremiah a word for us, today ?

Let us remind ourselves, first of all, *that we are no prophets*; I mean that certain things can only be said in the power of God, by those who have been commissioned to say them. Prophecy as a revelation of future events, as an unveiling of God's judgment, of God's purpose on given nations and peoples belongs to a given period of history preparatory to the coming of Christ. If we still can speak of a prophetic function of the Church, this function certainly differs in character from the prophetic function as we meet it in the Old Testament. What the Church now needs is not prophets but witnesses, — witnesses who have heard the word the Lord spake of old to his prophets, and later through His Son, and announces it to "this generation".

Having cleared this point, let us ask ourselves what message Jeremiah has for us today.

God rules

The first thing Jeremiah makes clear is *God's ruling*. We are sometimes tempted to forget that God rules. We are so aware of this-worldly powers that we find ourselves thinking and speaking as if our fate were in their hands. Theoretically we say, of course, that it is not ; practically we often act as if it were.

Here the prophets call us to order ; for to them the biggest Empires are only toys in the Lord's hand. Let us look at history with the calm self-possession of those who know that :

"The nations make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved ;

But God hath showed his voice, and the earth shall melt away " (Ps. xlv).

It means giving the statesmen of this world too much credit ever to believe that the final say on our human destiny lies with them.

God with us or we with God ?

God rules. This also means our allegiance to God stands first. Jeremiah opens before us grave perspectives as to what this may mean in our relation to our nation. For him it means standing alone against his whole nation, against what appeared to be, humanly speaking, the interests of his nation.

I do not know how you feel when you read some of these stories ; is not, for one who loves his nation, the fact of having to stand against it and seemingly to play the enemy's game ten times worse than death itself ? We have seen what deep rooted motives dictated Jeremiah's attitude ; he had to utter God's verdict, happen what may. Probably none of us will be called to so drastic a step. But anyone of us may be faced in some near future with hard choices. We may have to stand for the Christian fellowship we belong to as over against a whole trend of bitter nationalistic feeling. Anyone of us may some day have to choose between his loyalty to God and his loyalty to his nation. Are we ready "to obey God rather than man" ? God give us strength if such a choice should face us !

The Roots of Evil.

The third reality which stands out in Jeremiah's preaching is that to the prophet's mind war has deep-rooted causes and these are spiritual and ethical ; war is

not so much an evil as the fruit of evil, the unavoidable consequence of sin. Jeremiah has not described the social and political sins which lead to war as fully as Isaiah or Amos did a century before him. For to him they all go back to one fundamental sin : the nation has turned away from God and gone after " foreign gods " ; its leaders, — priests, prophets and rulers alike have led it astray, away from the fountains of living water ; the rulers have built their palaces on unrighteousness and broken their pledged word ; the prophets have thought their own thoughts and " dreamed dreams " ; the priests have guaranteed God's protection and said : " all is right " ! And God's first warnings have called forth no repentance.

If we transpose these things in our twentieth century setting, do we not see the heavy responsibilities of our States but, still more, of our Churches ? We too have said : " Peace, peace ", where there was no peace. Our Western world has become more and more " idolatrous " in its own modern ways. It reaps the fruits of ruthless exploitation of the weak by the strong, of lust for power and prestige. We are aware there is something fundamentally wrong with our social, economic and political systems. We are aware that what seemed to be the power and the strength of our civilization, our science, our wealth, has become a two-edged sword which pierces and kills.

" Things to come "

Our whole civilization stands under God's judgment. And here the question arises that only a prophet could solve : is the judgment impending ? are we heading toward catastrophe ? or can the judgment still be postponed ? This only God knows.¹

The message of the prophets is contained in one word : repentance. Repentance means : changing our ways. Have we earnestly, we Christians, begun to change our ways ?

I am no prophet. I do not know if God's way will be

¹ We have left these lines as they were written in early August 1939.

peace or war for the Europe of tomorrow. What I do know is that we should pray for true repentance and for postponement of judgment. But at the same time we must be ready to stand under God's judgment when it comes and under whatever form it comes.

God may have decided to let the forces of evil have their way for a time, that "a remnant may be saved" through the fire of that hell and a new future be built. This I do not know. But I do know the things for which we must stand : righteousness and mercy ; and above all, a change of heart.

I may scandalize some of you, but what really matters for the Church of Christ is not peace or war but *our turning back to God* ; God may work mightily in days of proving and be ignored in times of peace. Israel's exile was to be the time of God's visitation. It is of God's absence from the heart of men that our world dies. Only back to God is the way to recovery.

The Door of Hope

" I will make the dale of Trouble a door of Hope " (Hos. ii. 15). Here comes the last essential lesson we should draw from the prophetic teaching : the darkest hours are those which precede dawn : when all human doors of escape close on us, God opens " a door of hope ". Over the chaos of our world, His tremendous reality stands, ever righteous and merciful ; all the greater for our littleness ; the One reality on which we can stake our all ; the One Helper who never fails ; the One Lord, to whom, in all human affairs, the final word belongs.

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And what the prophets dimly saw, we know : over the raging battlefields His Cross stands, with ever outstretched arms.

A Selection of Ten Readings from the Book of Jeremiah, with Questions

(These questions are intended either for private study or for Study circles — For close study of text we recommend Peake's Commentary, *The Century Bible, Jeremiah Vol. I and II*)

First Week **The Word of the Lord came**

Reading : Jeremiah chapter i.

Questions :

1. Define the biblical conception of a prophet as shown by the story of Jeremiah's vocation.

2. The Bible speaks of the word of God as an active power which performs what it commands. How did this word come to the prophet of old and how did he know it was God's word? How does it come to us today?

(Jer. i. ; cf. also v. 14 ; xxiii. 21-29 ; xxviii. 7-9 ; Amos iii. 7-8 ; Hebr. iv. 12-13 ; I Cor. ii. 4-5 ; II Pet. i. 21.)

Second Week **The Message : God's pleading with an "adulterous" nation**

Reading : Mainly Jeremiah chapt. ii. ; see also chapt. iii. 1-6.

Questions :

1. God's main contention with his people is that they have forsaken their first love (ii. 1-13, 32, etc.). Why is this the greatest sin? And what light does this throw on Jeremiah's understanding of what faith means?

2. What are some of the "leaky cisterns" (ii. 13) that the people and leaders have hewn out for themselves?

How would you translate this in our contemporary world?

Third Week **Faith tested**

Reading : Jer. xi. 18 to xii. 6 ; xv. 10-21 ; xvii. 14-18 ; xx. 7-13, 14-18 ; xxvi. 12-15.

Questions :

1. What is the great problem on Jeremiah's mind in xii. 1-2 ? Does God's answer, v. 5-6, solve Jeremiah's problem ?...

(cf. Job xl. 1-14 ; xlii. 1-6).

2. What are the main stumbling-blocks which make the prophet's courage and faith waver, according to Jer. xv. 10-21 ; xvii. 14-18, 20 ; and where on the other hand lies his strength and consolation ?

3. What, would you say, are the main stumbling-blocks for our faith today ? Can you get any idea, from these passages of God's possible answer to us ?

Fourth Week **False piety denounced**

Reading : Jer. vii. 26 ; cf. xix. 14 to xx. 6.

Questions :

1. What are the basic reasons for the conflict between Jeremiah and the priesthood ? What is there fundamentally wrong, according to him, in his people's religion ?

Cf. on this point his teaching with the teaching of Jesus, Matt. xxi. 12-13 ; xxiii. ; xxiv. 1-2.

2. " The temple of the Lord ! the temple of the Lord ! "

(Jer. vii. 4.)

Religion conceived as a haven of security against the evils of the times : is this a danger which threatens the Church today ?

Fifth Week **Unruly rulers**

Reading : Jer. xxi. 11-12 ; xxii. ; xxxvi ; cf. II Kings xxii to xxv.

Questions :

1. Leadership is a trusteeship (Jer. v. 4-5 ; xxii. 13-16 ; xxiii. 1). What are the main sins with which Jeremiah charges Israel's rulers ? (xxii. 13-14, 17).

Compare Josiah as the type of the " good King " (II King xxii, xxiii, cf. Jer. xxii. 15-16) with his sons (II Kings xxiv-xxv. cf. Jer. xxii. 10-19 ; 24-30).

2. The book of Jeremiah presents us with an instance of the State standing for the freedom of the prophet as over against the official priesthood (xxvi. 11-19) ; as well as with instances when the prophet has been prosecuted by the State (xxxvi).

Discuss the biblical conception of the prophet as a *watchman* who advises kings and rulers and speaks authoritatively even on social and political matters. How far is this to be explained by Israel being a theocratic State, the Elect People? How far has the Church a prophetic function to perform? namely to stand for God's truth and righteousness in all realms of life, and therefore to warn the "powers that be" when they do not remain true to their function? How far is this freedom for the Church to speak God's word in all circumstances an inalienable right?

Sixth Week **False Prophets**

Reading : Jer. xiv. 10-18 ; xxiii. 9-32 ; xxviii.

Questions :

1. What are some of the characteristics of the "false prophets" described in the above passages? See also Jer. vi. 13-14 ; viii. 7-9 ; Ezek. xiii ; I Kings xxii ; Luke xii. 51, 54-56.

How shall we know the man who speaks "visions of his own heart" (he may call them religious "intuitions") from the authentic messenger of God?...

2. "Pray, say a good word" (I Kings xxii. 13). The rulers and the people, in a case of emergency, expect the man of God to support completely the nation in its enterprises. What should the Church of God say to this attempt to "mobilize all spiritual forces" if it is to keep true to its calling?

Seventh Week **God, Lord of History**

Reading : Jer. xviii. 1-10 ; xxv. ; cf. also xlvi to li.

Questions :

1. "Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand and made all the nations to drink" (xxv. 17).

The prophetic view of history is that God rules not only over his own people (xxv. 1-14 ; cf. i. 14-16 ; iv. 19-22) but over all nations (xxv. 15-31 ; cf. the judgment on Egypt, xlvi, on Babylon, li). Even those who seemingly oppose him are his "servants" (Jer. xxv. 9, cf. Isaiah x. 5-15).

Does this affirmation of God's sovereignty lessen in any way for our prophet his sense of the nations' responsibility? (Jer. xviii. 1-10).

War conceived as a judgment and chastisement. Discuss this.

2. What bearing has this prophetic conception of world history on our own situation to day?

Eighth Week **Two baskets of figs. Redeeming chastisements versus false hopes**

Reading : Jer. xxiv, xxix, xxxiv.

Questions :

1. What makes the exiles like good figs and Zedekiah and the people in Jerusalem like bad ones ? (xxiv, xxix).

Behind these stories lies the conviction that political events have a deeper meaning : in and through them God works out his redeeming purpose. Even Israel's chastisement is a token of God's searching love (Jer. xxix. 11-13 ; xxxi. 2-6, 18-20 ; ii. 30 ; cf. Amos iii. 1 ; Hosea ii. 6-7, 14-20 ; Job v. 17-18 ; Hebr. xii. 4-11).

Discuss this in relation to the testing times the Church of Christ faces today.

2. Some people think that " religion has nothing to do with politics ". Does the story of the freed slaves (Jer. xxxiv) throw some light on how God judges disloyalty in matters of social and political righteousness ?

Ninth Week **God's Cause and our causes**

Reading : Jer. xxxvii to xlv.

Questions :

1. Discuss Jeremiah's attitude in the besieged city : were those right who called him a traitor, or at least, a defeatist ? Are those right who would like to call him a " pacifist " standing for non-violence ?

From the above chapters and our preceding studies, try to define the real motives on which his whole attitude is grounded.

2. " But as for me, I am in your hands " (xxvi. 14). What can we learn today from Jeremiah's unflinching obedience to the word of God as over against all human pressures ?

Tenth Week **The great Expectation**

Reading : Jer. xxxii. 6-15, 24-27, 36-44 ; xxxi. 2-6, 31-34 ; xxiii. 1-8 ; xxxiii. 4-9.

Questions :

1. The time when all lose hope is the very time when the prophet announces deliverance. Cf. the story of Jeremiah's purchase deed (xxxii. 24-27). Why is this so ?

2. Jeremiah's expectation goes beyond a political restoration : what are some of the characteristics of his messianic hope ? In what does the " new covenant " he foresees differ from the ancient one ?... (xxxi. 31-34 ; iv. 4 ; xxiii. 1-8 ; cf. Exodus xix. 1-6, Hebr. viii. 7-13 ; x. 1-18).

In how far has Christ's coming fulfilled the prophet's expectation ? In how far is this awaiting of the last things, of God's Kingdom, a standing feature of our Christian faith ? (cf. Revel xxi to xxii).

"They that be with us are more..."

"Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host : and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host with horses and chariots was round about the city. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master ! how shall we do ? And he answered, Fear not : for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man ; and he saw : and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

II Kings vi. 14-17.

Who of us is there who knows no fear ? War enhances our fears. There is the fear of pain and sudden death, the fear of failing in one's duty, the fear of not doing the right thing in an emergency. There is fear for the safety of those whom we love, fear for the stability of the civilisation to which we belong, fear for the success of the cause of Christ in the world. "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."¹ We know today what this means.

* * *

¹ Luke xxi. 26.

The servant of Elisha lived in a time of long drawn-out conflict between Israel and Syria, but he had no immediate expectation of being personally involved. As he went about his duties one morning before men were usually astir, he discovered that war had come to his door. The peril of a city besieged brought sharp pangs of terror to his heart. The young man was afraid because the situation seemed suddenly hopeless. Courage is hard to come by before the sun is up. All his self-confidence deserted him. He could only run to his master with the very human cry: "Alas, my master, how shall we do?" What on earth is going to happen to us?

The kindly prophet met his servant's agitation with the simple order "Fear not". And then he added the amazing assertion, which ran right in the face of the visible facts, "for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." The danger was no danger at all, for, in spite of all appearances, the odds were on their side.

The look in the young man's eyes changed from alarm to bewilderment. Had the prophet lost his reason? Who in this undefended town could stand against the hosts of Syria? A summons to the resistance of despair he would have understood, but not this strange unfounded optimism.

Elisha knew that his servant could not see what he saw, — that he was blind. He also knew that second-hand courage would not save him, — that he must see for himself. The prophet turned at once to intercession, and because he was a man of faith his approach was direct, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see." God could do this, and He would.

The answer was as direct as the prayer. The "Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw." The mind which had been troubled by the sight of horses and chariots found them transformed from deadly evidences of material force to blazing symbols of spiritual power.

"The horses and chariots of fire" spoke to the young man of Him who is "unto us a God of deliverances" and

unto whom "belong the issues from death."¹ Now he could "endure as seeing Him who is invisible."² He would have henceforth the courage of faith, not the old indifference of false security. That kind of faith has a very practical bearing upon a man's conduct, when his world falls about him.

"The horses and chariots of fire" spoke to him of the Lord of hosts. "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." Now he knew that, come what may against him, he was "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses".³ He belonged to Israel; his God was the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. His companionship with his master, Elisha, was only a fragment of that wider communion of the saints.

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The forces of evil are loose in the world today. Our dreadful imaginings have become palpably real. No wonder we are afraid, as we look over the city wall. Yet we may ourselves look up, and pray heaven that others may look up, and behold the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. We do not hope for victory; we are assured of it in Christ. We do not look for company; we belong to the fellowship of those who bear His name.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

R. C. M.

¹ Ps. lxxviii, 19-20. — ² Hebr. xi, 27. — ³ Ibid. xii, 1.

THE EDITOR'S TRAVEL DIARY

The General Secretary's travel diary has been taken over by the Editor for the simple reason that the former has become the latter! My first task will be to see that in these difficult times you get a magazine at all. It will be a great help to learn about circulation and censorship. Please write and give me information, and, remembering that a new editor is gullible, advice!

Travel in the mind

The last item in my diary of July suggested that 13, rue Calvin was "a real centre of all that is happening (in the student world) in the East and America, as well as in Europe." And now, as I sit at a desk almost devoid of correspondence, and read the week-old London Times, I think what a fool I was. Then I reach for a file and turn up the much-prized letter of two days ago from Hungary, those of last week from Prague, and Tübingen, and Sofia, not to mention an earlier one from Japan, and a scribbled note from the French front-line. Then I dig out the gossip of the British Movement despatched on the 3rd of September, and that air-mail letter from Australia which beat it in the post! A card for Warsaw which came back undespatched is a sharp reminder of present-day tragedy. As I look at my post, I can travel in the mind. My journey assures me that the Federation is there, whatever may be happening to the map in two hemispheres. But I have other evidence in what I saw this summer, which, in spite of all that has happened in the interval, is only a month away.

Bohemia and Moravia

Just before I left for my world tour last autumn I visited Prague, and so it was a peculiar pleasure to be with Czech students again shortly after my return. To sit round a fire on the hill-side and hear songs sung, and poems read, many of them written in the last few months, was an unforgettable experience. Plans were made then, and are now being acted upon, for the kind of Bible study and evangelism which are costly, because they evade no issues.

France

The general committee was so happy at La Roche-Dieu, Bièvres in 1938, that we decided to hold the executive committee of July 1939 in this hospitable centre of the French S.C.M. We made plans with enthusiasm for international meetings which may now need to be postponed; and we prepared "a message from the leaders to the members of the W.S.C.F. concerning its task in times of war", hoping against hope that it would never need to be made public. But our best work was a careful survey of the needs and problems of many pioneering movements. The instability of life of student Christian groups in many countries, which war must greatly increase, makes it essential that the Federation should never lose itself in general principles, but be concerned with every fresh beginning, and every new generation of students.

Amsterdam

For many weeks beforehand it looked as if the World Conference of Christian Youth would be very difficult to pull off. And so it would have been, in spite of magnificent preparatory work by the committee and staff, if it had not suddenly become on the first night a self-conscious and purposeful assembly. The fact that 1500 young people from 70 countries could settle down so quickly to a common task is a tremendous justification of all the work of the last twenty years in drawing the youth of the world together in the service of Christ. That work made it possible for the delegates not only to meet, but to be frank with one another in discussion; not only to talk vaguely about religion, but to do Bible study together; not only to take part in special youth services, but to enter into one another's heritage of worship. Nothing that has happened since disproves what happened at Amsterdam. Christus Victor is not true in some ethereal sense; it is true in the lives of hundreds of delegates. The world of 1939 has not just slipped back into barbarism; it is a world in which the ecumenical life of the churches, and the Christian Youth organizations has advanced, and no power on earth can force it to retreat.

Nunspeet

The Federation camp in the first ten days of August was all rather a picnic! It was planned well ahead, and a good programme worked out, but would there be any delegates? About eighty people registered before 'Amsterdam', and then every day during the World Youth Conference the numbers grew until a hundred and eighty said they

were coming on with us to Nunspeet. As conference-jaded men and women were disgorged at midnight from a bus, which had lost its way, in a depressing drizzle, with the blanket supply running short, my heart failed me! But the camp staff, members of the Netherlands S.C.M., rose nobly to the occasion, and housed and fed us all.

The majority of the delegates already knew one another, and knew what they wanted. Steam which had been raised in a large conference could be blown off in a camp. The pace of the programme quickened, and informal groups sprang up. We discussed with great candour; our speakers spoke with increasing realism. Then all too soon we began to break up. China had to leave, then Japan, then people for the longer European journeys. We said "goodbye" with a new sense of meaning. We felt somehow that this was a vital moment in the life of our fellowship.

I remember the universal detestation of war, and the eagerness to make decisions in loyalty to Christ. I remember also the meeting at which we ran right down the Eastern frontier of Europe and a student spoke about the Christian group in each country. Two remarks remain with me. From a European student leader, "We have no building or resources, we rely only on the Grace of God"; from a Chinese student leader, "The Grace of God is so bracing"!

THE STUDENT WORLD CHRONICLE

Christus Victor

(Impressions of The World Conference of Christian Youth at Amsterdam¹
by student delegates.)

1. To characterise the Conference in one sentence I would say: it was a splendid Christian education. It enriched us in many a fine way.

The foremost comes the change of our notion of Christianity. While we work in our local associations or Church groups Christianity tends to become also only a local effort, limited by our parish boundaries. In this respect, Amsterdam produced the impression as if we were lifted on to a high peak, from which wide horizons opened before us. The Conference showed us Christianity from a world perspective. Our vision of it expanded over the whole inhabitable world-ecumenic, when we looked over the young people from all continents and of all races gathered for one purpose in that long hall. Christianity became in our eyes freshly the God-given religion, embracing, satisfying and uplifting human beings from the most varying cultures, traditions and temperaments. The prophet's vision of the day when every nation shall bow the knee to our Lord appeared more realizable, indeed realized in our gathering. Christianity became an intensely alive organism which accommodated itself to every type of environment, but bearing everywhere the beautiful features of its Founder.

Our grateful respect for the Conference grew deeper when we remembered the kind of world situation in which it is taking place. It was a world divided by national greed and pride and intolerance; a world conscious that it is heading towards a catastrophe, and yet unable to avoid it, because unable to change itself, and therefore desperately cruel; a world terrifying men into suspicion and isolation. And in such a world the Conference met, — a

¹ The Report entitled *Christus Victor* has now been published. It may be obtained at the price of 3.50 Swiss Francs from the Conference Headquarters 52, rue des Pâquis, Geneva.

symbol of a living Christianity, which did not let itself into the senseless exclusiveness of nations that have forgotten God.

The Conference brought to me a new and forcible proof that Jesus Christ is God indeed. I thought of a man teaching in the enslaved land of Palestine ; of hopeless misunderstanding with which He was met, even by His nearest friends ; of His dying as a criminal, despised by the wise, deserted by friends. And now after nineteen centuries in the name of this same man young people from all corners of the world have come to find together more clearly what He has to say in our perplexing situation, convinced that His solution is the only one of abiding value. Now, could He have been a man ?

A most valuable part of the Conference for me was the Bible study sessions in the mornings, after the topical address. There was something inexpressibly respectful and reverent in the atmosphere. We felt that the Bible and the figure of Jesus were judging us. The passages were so excellently chosen, the questions so ably planned, that we were brought face to face with our real religious position, individual and collective. The beautiful, disciplined and self-sacrificing life of Christ showed the poverty, slackness and self-concern of ours. The unified, loving and evangelically aggressive spirit of the primitive Church judged our divisions, lack of mutual interest and the lukewarm spirit of our Christianity. We learned here the fruitful way of Bible study, as it should be carried out in our groups of young people.

The afternoon study groups on specific subjects reminded us of another need of Christian life : not only to understand what the Gospel means to us in terms of ideas, but also what it requires to be done in the sphere of our life in society, in the world. I was in one of the groups discussing education. Two ideas came out as most significant for me. The first, that the personality and living faith of the leader or teacher mattered more than anything else in developing youth into Christian manhood. The second, that most education was without clear purpose. Also that education for collective usefulness is more akin to Christian thinking than development of powers in order to enhance one's profits and enlarge one's pleasures.

The whole conference presented a challenge to us. Its realism kept us constantly awake that we have come together in order to learn what Christ's will is for us to do in this world when we go back to our respective countries. Our lives unsundered or incompletely surrendered to Christ, our unjust society, our foolish international relationships were confronted with a vision of fully

sanctified life, of a just society and of at least legally proper international relationships. We were called by Christ to start from the actual and work towards the ideal.

Our world needs the announcement of the Christian message in our lives and in our words, for it gives an answer to the most fundamental needs, problems and hopes of our times.

The youth are longing for the truth of Christ's message though most often they are not aware of it, and mistakenly seek it on other sides. Only Christ's teaching can make to them sense of this world, which otherwise paralyses them with its meaninglessness and emptiness. They look at the world as pictured by crude rationalistic colours and find it too dreary to live surrounded and constantly at the mercy of impersonal, mechanical powers, which in an arbitrary and playful way determine their destiny. For most youth, religion has lost the credit and they find it impossible to accept the joyful and personal universe by which Christ wants to correct their gloomy view. A strong and intellectually convincing scheme of the world from Christ's point of view must be made to youth. But if their mind is as often intellectually closed to arguments for the truth of Christianity, their eyes and their souls are never closed to a truly Christian life, which makes them long for delivery out of their natural, unreclaimed living. In social, evangelical or scientific activity of Christians, we find the best witness to Christ. So Christ solves the second greatest need of youth — the successful technique of living, which is of course closely connected with the first — the favourable meaning of the world.

In the sphere of collective life, the main concern is war, internationally, and just economic relationships nationally.

The war frustrates the life activities of immature people, young or old. It makes them abandon all schemes of personal enhancement, as if war made them useless, and feverishly and cynically search for the greatest amount of pleasure where no full pleasure is to be found. The panic has taken up their mind, and only Christ can make them quiet. The Bible would show them that war and rumours of war were before us now, but that in any case, whether we die or live on, our life is in the hands of God, who is our loving Father, as revealed in his son Jesus Christ. The strong Gospel of Christ can pacify the fear-stricken man.

The judgment of Christ is also on the peace we have, socially and internationally. It is an unjust peace, enabling smaller groups to make use of larger ones. If it gets destroyed, the world belongs to God, and He will be able to make a better peace.

Ratibor DJURDJEVIC (Yugoslavia)

2. The attempt of an ordinary delegate to evaluate the Amsterdam conference is inevitably as impertinent as it is inadequate. Experience with ecumenism limited to a small Christian association, a few books and as many romantic dreams, together with a lack of full understanding of the great and crossed traditions of the religious world make it impertinent. Language difficulties presenting themselves mostly in questions of technical terminology; the great numerical as well as racial and national size of the conference; and the short duration of it, make appraisal inadequate. Yet there were certain factors which helped one greatly to achieve some degree of objective and comprehensive view of the whole. One remembers particularly a remarkable bit of organization whereby one was with different groups in the dormitories, at meals and at discussions. Moreover, there were constant individual conversations, all of which centered about some aspect of the conference. And finally, great pains were taken with translation, all speeches being printed in those languages in which they were not delivered. But objective accuracy is difficult to achieve in any matter, and even with all possible aids it is extremely hard to achieve with regard to Amsterdam. In whatever is said, it will be well to remember as much.

Undoubtedly the values of Amsterdam were great. There is in the first place the obvious fact of the conference. It is certainly significant that in these troubled times probably the most representative conference in the world's history could be held, and — what is more — held under the banner of *Christus Victor*. Yet so much has been said about this that a word of caution is necessary. We cannot afford to forget the ease of transportation; the fact that delegates from distressed countries were inevitably — and probably unwittingly — excellent means for the promotion of sympathy for those countries; and the undeniable fact of mixed motivations on the part of delegates themselves, becoming apparent in curiosity, the appeal of a long journey, the importance of being a delegate.

Secondly, there was the great opportunity for first-hand insight into situations differing from our own, together with an increased understanding of the differing Christian reactions to those situations. All of us before Amsterdam knew the ease with which we could refute a printed theory; no one at Amsterdam could easily brush aside a living faith, however greatly it may have differed from his own. And from this necessity for understanding grew fuller and deeper individual convictions. A rather smug American pacifism for instance could no longer be smug

in the face of people returning to China, and it is probably not inaccurate to say that the Continental intellect could not proceed too blithely with theoretical theology in the face of the American demand for action.

Thirdly, the conference program taken as a whole could not help but be of great value. Speeches will fade, perhaps, but the fact of a group representing the world bound together in prayer will not be forgotten. Details may slip away, but the impression of the same group studying the Bible in all earnestness will not quickly vanish. Many of us *realized* our theories of "community" here for the first time. In many of us was awakened a true love of the Bible where heretofore there had been only academic interest and a rather dutiful one at that.

And a final word must be said about the constant tone of the Conference. Whatever was the mixture of motivation which operated beforehand, it was true that at Amsterdam there was an air of earnest concern which in itself was a challenge. It was a conference of youth; in the full realization of the difficulty of being Christian and of the seriousness of the matter.

For all of its great points, however, Amsterdam was lacking sadly in one major — one might almost say overwhelming — respect. For it seemed that Amsterdam represented an example of the youth of the churches attempting to save its life by seeking it. Amsterdam was much more of this world than of another; there was little loss of life; there was much concern for ourselves. Now this will always be true to a degree else we would not have to repent of sin. But the fact seemed distressingly obvious at Amsterdam. Consider three major points — the question of unity, the question of Communion, the question of discussion groups. We heard much about unity at the conference. We were all one in Christ, we had united under a common banner, we belonged to a common community. Yet the fact was that we were not united; we were by no flight of the imagination at one with one another, either in all prayer or in thought or action. We heard much of unity but we never once heard for what purpose we were to be one. We lost sight of our function in our aesthetic desire, and as a result lost that which we sought. We sought unity for its own sake, losing sight of any purpose, and received disunity.

Secondly the case of Communion. We had four Communion services, from each of which some members of the conference were excluded. Now when we take it upon ourselves to exclude another from Communion, we are saying to him in the most serious way that in our collective judgment he is not a Christian

— an act of judgment which, if one reads the Gospels aright, belongs essentially to God and not to man. The churches in other words were so concerned at Amsterdam with their own beliefs, their own historical traditions, their own present day status, that they quite confidently assumed the role of judge and forsook that of witness. The churches sought their own lives and are now no further along the road to community in Communion than before Amsterdam.

And finally the same must be said of at least my own discussion group. After repeated warnings at the start of the danger of the conference, after many exhortations to be considerate and understanding, after many reminders that although we were "one" there were really deep differences, the discussion group — made up of continentals, English and Americans — were so self-conscious, that each beat a constant retreat into the exposition of his own particular tradition, and dogmatic justification of the same. *The Nature and Mission of the Church* in the face of secularism manifesting itself in wars and persecutions! A glorious opportunity for a prophetic loss of life, and we were guilty of missing it. This perhaps was true of only one discussion; but it was painfully true here, and there is reason to believe that the same held for others.

What then does Amsterdam mean? Certainly not that we should exercise our little minds in moaning criticism of its faults. That would be to continue to seek our lives, proud that we can criticise a great and valuable event. Let us be frank about the deficiencies; but above all let us be courageous in the loss of life to right those deficiencies; let us see the deadness of unity for its own sake and strive for a functional unity; let us see the tragedy of separate Communion and forget ourselves in the achievement of true Communion.

The conference thrilled twice at a genuine loss of life. In the service of preparation for Communion, the leader said: "Here we are God. We are to have separate Communion. Forgive us for our sin." And in a great speech, Dr. Mott pleaded with the delegates — "Christian youth, leaders of the world" — for a real commitment to Christ. In these two, repentance and commitment lie that great hope. Bob BILHEIMER (U.S.A.)

3. Two facts have been clearly emphasised at the Amsterdam Conference: contemporary Christian youth is faithful to the Church and is definitely conscious of its responsibility towards the world.

The Church is considered by youth, not only as the essential

sphere of Christian life and activity, but also as the real presence of Christ himself in the souls and in the lives of the faithful who are inwardly united by their Saviour. The majority of the conference members had a common faith in the Holy Trinity, in the Divinity of Jesus Christ and in the authenticity of God's revelation in the Bible. Theological liberalism seems only to survive in America! One may say that the line of religious development of the world is definitely fixed; it is long and difficult as perfection itself, but if we follow it we shall come nearer unity.

According to the Amsterdam conference, the main points of Christian activity in this world are the following: the preaching of the Gospel of Christ throughout the whole world; the relation of the personal and social life to faith in Christ; the organization of racial, national and class relations on a basis of solidarity; the recognition of the personal value and freedom of every man. The American delegates were especially fervent partisans of the "world's salvation". Others expressed the fear that Christian activity in this world might lead Christians away from their purely religious duty. Still others found that the unified and organized activity of a Christian society was not yet possible, and preferred to speak of the personal initiative of separated groups. But one can foresee, all the same, that another tendency will finally prevail and that everybody will recognise that confessional and national divergencies must not prevent us from reaching a practical and common solution of the fundamental problems of our time, especially as those are alike in all countries and as the differences between confessions do not touch the primary truths of Christianity where they are concerned with man and society.

At the present moment we must no doubt rejoice in the efforts carried out by individuals for the partial christianisation of the world, but let us hope that the Amsterdam conference will serve to hasten and increase the unification of Christian forces, for the time is short.

S. VERCHOVSKY (Russian S.C.M. in emigration)

4. It is only today, when some members of the conference are at the front, and many others find themselves in uniform and mobilized, that the true importance of Amsterdam can be understood. Truly on this earth of ours peace and love of one's neighbour are only to be found where the Word of God is preached, in the Church: everywhere else they only appear on the surface and even these are counterfeit. We came back from Amsterdam, where we had all been united in the *victory* of Christ over the

world and where we had acknowledged that victory, and were plunged suddenly into the terrible reality of a new war. The world in which we are ambassadors of Christ, sent to preach *His* peace and *His* love, is a world of war and hate... but we knew that, our Master had warned us, and our amazement was, at bottom, but a sharp awakening from our bourgeois torpor!

I seem to be talking with great ease of something so appalling and terrifying as war. But this is not ease. We knew that wars awaited us, we know that we live in a world of hate, a world which slew the Prince of Peace... but we also know that that world is conquered and that the decisive victory *is already won*. *Christus Victor*! Christ is Conqueror! That is what we learnt at Amsterdam (even if we already knew it, we have to learn it every day anew, and first of all in our personal lives!), and at Amsterdam we learnt it in the communion of brothers whom we did not yet know and whom, at times, we hesitated to call brothers! It is a sign of the infinite patience of God that He permitted us to share in this conference before the outbreak of war, and His divine patience encourages us to reflect on what the conference has given us and what we can still do because it took place.

The dominant impression made on me by Amsterdam may seem to be negative; from all that we said, the churches were not in action! And yet in the discussion group of which I was a member (*The Nature of the Church and its Mission in the World*) no single member spoke in his own right, but each one took part only to tell what his church thought. It is magnificent, from an ecumenical point of view, to have passed the sentimental stage, the stage where one stops at mere acquaintance. We had reached the moment of real contact, contact between the members of different churches, all conscious of the privilege and the responsibility.

And now that we know that everywhere, over all the earth, ecumenically, in the strict sense of the word, men and women are members of the Church, and accept Christ as Vanquisher of Sin — *their* sin no less than that of the whole world — now we are afraid no longer, we know that though Satan may start in his anguish, he is already overcome, he can do us no more hurt, if we acknowledge every day anew, with joy and earnestness, that we are held in the hand of God.

However this knowledge has its consequences, and these were shown us most admirably at Amsterdam:

(a.) *Humility*. Our mind came up against other minds, and we must understand that what matters is not our particular

opinions, but to "try the spirits to see if they be of God". Our mind must be at the service of Him who said that He was the Truth, and that is why we must be humble. That is why our mind can never be but human and sinful save in so far as it is a witness to the Word of God, even to Jesus Christ.

(b.) *Perseverance in Study.* The differences, often insurmountable, which separated us at Amsterdam sent us home with the duty of deepening our faith by thought and prayer. We must study theology more, *our Bibles in our hands.*

(c.) A fuller sense of our *responsibility*, first in our parish, or at the front, or in our regiment. Wherever we are, we are ambassadors of Him who won the final victory, and that gives us — from above, for otherwise we could do nothing — an extraordinary power which must manifest itself in our witness.

These notes are very brief, and perhaps not very appropriate. They are written in a moment of liberty allowed by a general mobilization. But there is only one thing I would say, and that is that Amsterdam would have no value if *now*, yes, now more than ever, we did not know that Christ was Conqueror, and that Amsterdam has allowed us to understand that better.

In his simple words, which seem to us sometimes to be those of a little child, and which are yet full of the dynamic which faith alone brings, Luther says about Satan: *Ein Wörtlein kann ihn fällen.* It takes only a little word to conquer him — this little word has been spoken: It was a poor man, wounded and shamefully put to death on a cross, and yet who is risen and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence He *shall come* to judge the living and the dead.

Amsterdam helped us to understand this better and also to proclaim it better. The conference did not fail, thanks be to God.

Jean-Jacques VON ALLMEN (Switzerland)

Evangelism in War-time China¹

Spring, 1939

In the light of the present conditions in China, one would not deem it feasible to conduct an organized Youth and Religion Movement Campaign in the far interior. In the first place, the on-going undeclared war, which has been waged on a scale un-

¹ For map showing position of University centres See *The S. C. M. in the Far Eastern Conflict*, obtainable from 13, rue Calvin, Geneva, price Sw. fr. 1.50.

known in the history of the Orient, has become the dominating factor in the life and thought of the Chinese people, especially the educated classes. Secondly, since the Central Government has made the interior centers such as Kunming, Kweiyang, Chungking and Chengtu, bases of operation and administration, the consequent extension of the war areas in Central and South China and the removal of industries and schools and the overwhelming increase of population, have shaken the foundations of the life of these cities. The mixing of the old and the new, native and outsider, has created a state of confusion. This is true not only of the community life but also of the life of the Christian churches. Thirdly, although the front lines are still quite far away from these cities, air-raids are anticipated at any moment. One air-raid on Kumming last September caused the evacuation of all middle schools and a large number of families to the neighbouring districts. One air-raid on Kweiyang last February devastated one fourth of the city and took a toll of more than 1,000 lives. Finally, the difficulties in travelling by motor car and even by airplane present a real problem for any scheduled work.

The Youth and Religion Movement Committee

However, the concentration of youth, students and non-students, in these centers presents a real challenge to all Christian forces in China. Spiritual help as well as material assistance is urgently needed. Two representatives each from the National Christian Council of China, the China Christian Educational Association and the National Committees of the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. met last winter and decided to launch a Youth and Religion Movement Mission for West and Southwest China. An Executive Committee was organized with Dr. Chester S. Miao, Executive Secretary of the C.C.E.A., as Chairman and the writer as Executive Secretary.

The Mission, composed of four outstanding Christian leaders and one executive secretary, worked on the general principle that instead of short-term evangelistic campaigns the Mission would stay for a comparatively longer period of time in each city in order to attain the following objectives :

1. To conduct evangelistic activities in the interior cities among youth, students and non-students, refugees, Christians and non-Christians, in the light of our present day situation and needs.
2. To strengthen the local Christian forces, such as the Churches, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. by helping in their regular

program, opening new fields of service and enlisting new lay leadership.

3. To help introduce Christians from outside to the local Churches.

The Kunming Campaign—Mar. 22-Apr. 6

Kunming is now a strategic national and international center of Southwest China in the light of the development of communications, industries, schools and cultural institutions. The French Indo-China-Yunnan Railway, and the Yunnan-Kweichow Highway, which are among the busiest roads in the Far East to-day, and the Burma-Yunnan Highway, the Burma-Yunnan Railway and the Yunnan-Szechuan Railway, which are now under construction, all meet at Kunming and then radiate to all the Southwest and West China provinces. The establishment of large factories and institutions of higher learning is even more striking to the visitor. The Southwest Associated University of the National Peking University and Tsinghua University, formerly of Peiping, and Nan-kai University, formerly of Tientsin, has nearly two thousand students, most of whom are from North China and the coastal provinces. The National Yunnan University has nearly a thousand students. The Engineering School of Tung-chi University, formerly of Shanghai, has also a student body of six hundred. The National Chung Cheng Medical College, formerly of Nanchang, has an enrolment of one hundred seventy. The National Art College has over two hundred and the College of Physical Education and the Provincial College of Agriculture each have more than one hundred students. These are all located either within or near to the city. Chungshan University, formerly of Canton, and Hwa-chung College, formerly of Wuchang, and part of the Tung-chi University are all located in the nearby secondary cities.

Besides students there are thousands of educated youth working in the Government offices, new factories, new business firms, railway and highway headquarters, post and telegraph offices, etc. The hotels and restaurants are simply crowded with people between the ages of twenty and forty. Most of them, like the students, are from North and Central China and the coastal provinces. Aside from their material needs, they need friendship, fellowship and spiritual guidance. In fact, the need is so great that the local Christian forces are quite inadequately prepared to meet it.

The Local Programme

As far as time for local preparations was concerned, Kunming faced a great disadvantage. It was the first city visited in our itinerary. However, with the close cooperation of the church, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. leaders, the program in general emerged much better than we had anticipated.

1. Bishop C. T. Song conducted a series of four evangelistic meetings in the Zion's Church for professional youth.

Since all the middle schools in the city have moved to the neighbouring towns and secondary cities and the University Center is outside of the city, the audience was composed largely of educated professional youth within the city. The average attendance on the four nights was about 250, which was just the kind of group we had expected.

As a result of his four lectures 73 men and women, Christians and non-Christians, signed cards signifying their desire to study the Bible and the Christian truth further. Bishop Song then spent two afternoons after the regular series speaking on "How to Study the Bible", using printed outlines prepared in advance. There are more than forty in the study groups including seven students of the Southwest Associated University.

2. Dr. Lautenschlager's series in the Southwest Associated University—As an introduction to his series of talks, Dr. Lautenschlager spoke to the whole student body of the Associated University at a Monday Memorial Service with an attendance of about 1,000 on "The European Crisis and the Future of the Sino-Japanese War". On three successive evenings, he spoke on (1) "The Meaning of Life"; (2) "The Meaning of Faith"; and (3) "The Meaning of Mission". Attendance at these meetings, held in one of the classrooms, was on a purely voluntary basis. On the first two evenings, there were more than 150 students present each evening. The last evening was windy, rainy, chilly and dark and it was thought that nobody would come to the meeting, because students desiring to attend would have to walk a considerable distance. To everyone's surprise, about 100 students showed up, which was a sure indication of their interest in religious subjects. Then 30 of the students stayed after the meeting and signed cards indicating their desire to organize a fellowship for religious study and Christian service.

3. Series of meetings in the Chung Cheng Medical College by Dr. Lautenschlager—After a long and difficult trip from Nanchang to Kunming, the Chung Cheng Medical College moved from the newly built, modern buildings in the erstwhile Military Capital of

China, Nanchang, to the thatched sheds with dirty floors in a country place about twenty *li* (seven miles) away from the city of Kunming. This removal brought the College closer to nature, to the people and to the rural community where medical service is most needed. They lost their fine buildings but not the up-to-date scientific instruments and library for medical studies.

It was the first Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Service held since they moved to that new place. Dr. Lautenschlager was the speaker. After the meeting students interested in religious subjects were requested to stay for another meeting. About sixty, half of the total number of the students, stayed and discussed religious questions for nearly two hours. Then they asked for another meeting, which turned out to be as successful as the first one. As a result of these two meetings, 40 students, Christian and non-Christian, decided to organize a fellowship group for religious study and service. According to the latest report the membership of the fellowship has increased from forty to forty-five, and they are having regular Sunday services and study classes.

During the team's visit in Kunming, altogether 59 meetings were held, large and small, for students and non-students, with a total estimated attendance of 10,093 and with 136 men and women making decisions either to become Christians or to study the Christian truth or to become better Christians.

The Kweiyang Campaign—April 11-20

Kweichow, which used to be one of the most backward and poorest provinces, has become one of the most promising districts in China. The opening of highways has made Kweichow the center of communications in Southwest and West China. At present there are still 120,000 men engaged in building more roads, in order to complete the provincial, national and international network of highways. Driving from Yunnan to Kweichow, one cannot but be impressed by the man power of China which has made it possible for the roads to cross high mountains and deep valleys without modern engineering equipment. If the Great Wall of China is one of the wonders of the world, the highways in the mountainous Southwest and West China should be another.

Agriculture, mining, industry, trade and education are all developing scientifically and systematically and making progress by leaps and bounds under expert leadership. Take education for example. Four years ago, the provincial budget was only Ch\$300,000 a year for the schools, and there was not a single

college in the whole province. Now, in time of war when money is needed everywhere, they are spending Ch\$1,400,000 a year for education and they have two universities, namely, the Great China University, formerly of Shanghai, and University of Communications, formerly of Tang Shan, and two colleges, the National Kweiyang Medical College and the Hsiangya Medical College, formerly of Changsha, besides the military and political schools and schools for public health workers and nurses under the Central Government.

Kweiyang is the capital of the province situated in the heart of the mountains. It is quite a unique city in many ways. With wide streets, high buildings, prosperous business conditions, Kweiyang is a modern city in a backward province. The writer paid his first visit to that city a year ago in connection with the establishment of a new Y.M.C.A. and made his second visit there last fall. This last visit made with the Y. and R. M. Mission was his third one, when he found that recent bombings had changed the whole appearance of the city. The most congested and prosperous business section exists no longer and is absolutely unrecognizable. In fact, one fourth of the city has been wiped out by Japanese bombs. Walking block after block, one finds nothing but ruins, debris, ashes, evidences of destruction of property and of more than one thousand lives of civilians.

The Local Programme

Kweiyang is, comparatively speaking, not a large city, and there are not many things going on in the city proper. Therefore, it is easier to have effective publicity work there and to call people together for meetings. The meeting place was the auditorium of the People's Educational Center, the largest hall in the city. Dr. Lautenschlager spoke on (1) The Crisis in Europe ; (2) The Future of the Sino-Japanese War ; (3) The World's Hopes and Needs of Today and (4) Christ and His Cross.

The subjects of the first two nights were naturally attractive to all educated people. The hall was packed with one thousand people, with another five hundred more standing outside of the windows which had been completely blown out by bombs. We had thought that there would not be very many people coming to the third and fourth meetings, especially the last one, which dealt with clearly a religious subject. Contrary to expectations, there were just as many people present as at the first two meetings, even though the evenings were dark and rainy and the streets muddy. Many students had to walk several miles from outside of the city to these meetings.

After each meeting those who would like to ask questions were requested to stay for an after-meeting. Each evening, more than 800 stayed for another hour or so. In the last meeting, many people were greatly moved by the message on the life and death of Jesus Christ. More than 150 men and women, mostly college students and young military officers, made decisions either to study the Bible or to become Christians or to become better Christians.

The Great China University called a special meeting for its two hundred women students and invited Miss Shao to speak to them. She spoke on "My Religious Faith" which aroused deep interest.

The Chungking Campaign—April 25-May 8

The term "West China" usually applies to Szechuan Province, which is as large as Germany in both territory and population. Szechuan is noted for the natural beauty of its mountains and rivers. Its historical glory, which has for several decades been in eclipse by militarists, has come back to it again, since it came under the direct control of the Central Government, as a most important base in the war of resistance against the Japanese invasion. It has supplied manpower as well as raw materials and is continuing to do so without limit. Its fertile soil in the valleys as well as on the mountain tops is all cultivated and irrigated. It controls the upper Yangtze River, standing between the Southwest and Northwest and serving as the backbone of the Chinese Republic.

Chungking, the war-time capital of China, is located in the lower part of Szechuan. Military and political orders and diplomatic statements in international affairs in this emergency time emanate from this city. Besides, it is also an industrial, financial, commercial, cultural and educational center. The Yangtze and the Kialing Rivers flowing on both sides of the city, and the surrounding mountains make Chungking a gorgeous and impressive sight.

Chungking was bombed on May 3, 4, 12 and 25, during and immediately following the Y. and R. M. Campaign. Modern warfare can change a beautiful prosperous city into debris, ashes, ruins and the living human beings into pieces of flesh, drops of blood and charcoal. The Chungking bombings have taken a toll of from 5,000 to 10,000 lives. However, not a single Government or civil leader was injured or killed, nor was a single military establishment touched. Those who suffered were the common people. Bombing of non-combatants can only increase hatred and indefinitely prolong the war. So much for the description of the general situation in Chungking.

The Local Programme

The meetings were held in the Institutional Church with Dr. Lautenschlager as the main speaker. He spoke on (1) "Christianity and the Crisis of our Present World"; (2) "Faith and Life in Time of Emergency" and (3) "The Meaning of the Cross". On the first evening there were more than 800 people present. On the second and third evenings more than 1,000. At the second meeting, more than 400 Christians stood up to rededicate their lives and 25 non-Christians wished to study the Christian truth and to become Christians.

The Christian Fellowship in the branch school of the Central University, which has 600 freshmen, was organized spontaneously. It came about in this way. One Christian student singing a hymn in his room was heard by other Christians. Thereupon they got together and organized a Fellowship. This fellowship has ninety members, of whom only fifty are Christians. This shows that even non-Christians are interested in a Christian group. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed which is the smallest of seeds but which grows into a big tree.

The Chengtu Campaign—May 11-25

After two days' strenuous travel in an open truck exposed to the heat of the sun on the first day and to rain on the second, the Y. & R. Team arrived at Chengtu on scheduled time. Chungking has become famous, because it is an inland river port which has recently become the war-time capital of China; but Chengtu has been famous for thousands of years, because it was the capital of the West Han Dynasty, one of the famous Three Kingdoms in Chinese history. Chengtu resembles Peiping in that it is a typical ancient Chinese city. The buildings are not high, the streets, with a few exceptions, are not wide. Different craft shops are to be found in certain sections of the city, which take one back to the Medieval Ages, with its guild system. Chengtu, a quiet and clean city, is the capital of Szechuan Province, being known as "Little Peking".

Chengtu City is in the heart of the fertile Chengtu basin, with the most ancient irrigation system in China, built over two thousand years ago by a Chinese engineer named Lee Ping. Thanks to this irrigation system, with ditches, canals and dams, Chengtu has never suffered from floods or droughts during the last two thousand years and has become one of the most densely populated and well-to-do rural districts in the world.

Originally, the Y. & R. M. Mission did not include Chengtu in

its itinerary. Since the outbreak of hostilities Chengtu has, next to Shanghai, become the second largest Christian educational center in China. The University of Nanking and Ginling College, formerly of Nanking, Cheeloo University of Tsinan, and the Biology Department of Soochow University are all in the compound of West China Union University. In addition, the Medical College of Central University has also joined this group of universities. In fact, the Christian community in the city has become quite strong, with the well established Canadian Mission, Church Missionary Society, Methodist E. Mission, China Inland Mission, etc. The city is full of outstanding Christian institutions and leaders, both local and from the outside.

The Local Programme

A series of meetings at Kwanghwa University, formerly of Shanghai, which is now about five miles outside of the city of Chengtu. It is a private institution, yet the teachers and students suspended their classes in the first period of the day for four days in succession in order to have the whole student body and staff attend the lectures. On the first morning, 400 students of college grade attended. On the following three mornings three hundred senior middle school students were added to the audience. In the last meeting, Dr. Lautenschlager spoke on "Christ and Christianity in History". The students listened just as attentively to this lecture as they had to the other lectures. Then the Christians were asked to say for a short conference, in which the significance of Christian fellowship was discussed. A few days later, before the Mission left Chengtu, it was reported that a Christian fellowship had been organized in Kwanghwa University.

As a result of the city series, 35 Christians, men and women, made decisions to re-dedicate their lives for Christ and 33 non-Christians made decisions to study Christianity or to become Christians.

A series of three lectures for the Hwa Mei Girls' Middle School which has moved ten miles outside of the city and which has a student body of about 400. We had to meet with them the first class period of the day in the open air, for they do not have an assembly hall. In the last meeting, there were 43 Christian students signing cards signifying their desire to become better Christians, 49 non-Christians wanted to become Christians and 43 wanted to study the Bible.

C. C. LIANG.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Exegesis of the Old Testament

The editor of this periodical has asked me to write an article which will review some recent books of Old Testament scholarship, and I gladly refer to a few publications of recent years which are interesting both to theologians and to non-theologians. I shall do this from the point of view of exegetical method. An introductory remark will elucidate this point of view, and at the same time characterize the present situation of the study of the Old Testament.

The Student's Dilemma

We can divide exegetical methods into two categories. The first category of methods is the result of the increase in the materials for study, of the wider knowledge of languages, the finds of archaeology, the new knowledge of history, sociology and geography, of the accumulation of new data for the history of religion, and of deeper insight into questions of style and of textual criticism. Although these different fields of study are closely bound up with one another, specialization is a necessary consequence of the development of research. It is very properly observed that it is not to be expected that any one scholar should be an expert in all the various departments of knowledge which, according to modern standards, must contribute their quota towards the full understanding of the Bible. All these various departments have their own methods of exegesis. However they have one common end which none of them can attain independently. That common end may be defined simply as the understanding of the meaning of the text, *exegesis e mente auctoris*.

The methods of the second category are of a different character. There is first the method which extends the data by combining it with other stories for purposes of elucidation (as the Jews loved to do); this is the Midrashic method. Secondly there is the eschatological method; this consists in interpreting the texts in agreement with the ideas about the "last days" current at the

time. Thirdly there is the allegorical method which discerns some deeper hidden meaning over and above that of the *peshat*, the exact sense (e. g. St. Paul in I Cor. ix. 9 ff. and the early Fathers *passim*). In the Middle Ages we find the method of the four-fold meaning. In later centuries the "dogmatic" method arose; this uses the Scriptures to prove a particular dogmatic presupposition. The eighteenth century brought in the method of rationalistic "exegesis". It is clear that we cannot properly describe these methods of interpretation as exegesis; we do better to speak of "the use of the Old Testament for certain purposes" — and often for very different purposes: e. g. the Jewish messianism in the Targumim (i.e. Aramaic translations of the Old Testament) and the Midrashim (i.e. the elucidation of stories already in the Bible), or the psychological and moral speculations in the writings of Philo, or the rationalism and philosophy in the eighteenth century and later.

The use of the first category of methods can lead to confusion and to dejection about the possibility of attaining the end in view. I found a symptom of such dejection in an otherwise instructive essay of W. E. Oesterly, when he writes: "It will readily be understood that when light is shed on the Bible from such manifold quarters the illumination may sometimes become embarrassing in the sense that the meaning of some given text is seen in consequence to be susceptible of more than one interpretation; philology may indicate one thing, archaeology another, comparative Semitic religion a third; they seem to be difficult to reconcile, and thus diversity of opinion as to the true meaning of the text naturally arises. This is bewildering to the student. He has our profound sympathy. In cases like this, however, where much is to be said on either side — and they are many as the commentaries will show — he may, on the one hand, recognize the many-sidedness of truth and see that the text *does* contain more than one meaning, or he may, on the other hand, exercise his own judgement and choose the interpretation that appeals to him; in either case he will not go far wrong if he takes all the data into consideration." (See *Record and Revelation, Essays on the Old Testament by members of the society for Old Testament study*, edited by H. Wheeler Robinson, Oxford, 1938, p. 448.) The advice given here is in my opinion perilously sceptical and lacking in patience. How can I understand all the difficulties? The way of exegesis is longer than my study. A commentary that explains everything is in any case a failure. Again, if the scholars, in trying to choose among the many different ways of interpret-

ation, forget the purpose of their study and see their own way as an end, that too is in fact a failure. The greatest danger of misunderstanding the author's meaning lies probably in "historism".

Is "Theological Exegesis" the Way out ?

It is not surprising that under these circumstances the ecclesiastical use of the Old Testament has been separated from study and exegesis. Nowadays the world asks : Is the Old Testament a book of the Jews or a book of the Christian Church ? and contemporary theology asks : What is the *kerugma*, the preaching of the Church ? And exegesis gives a definite answer neither to the world nor to theology. The time is therefore ripe for a new method of exegesis to be tried, or for the revival of old methods in new forms and combinations. This has actually happened and the new name is "theological exegesis".

It is not easy to do justice to contemporary phenomena. However, I think I am right in characterising this method of Old Testament exegesis as follows : The whole Bible is understood as the incarnate Logos, with a magic effect. (See the article of K. H. Miskotte in *De Openbaring der verborgenheid — The Revelation of the Mystery* — Baarn, Holland, 1934.) We find in the New Testament the messianic and theological use of the Old Testament and therefore the Christian theologian must interpret the Old Testament in the same manner. W. Vischer says plainly : "dass und zugleich inwiefern das alte Testament Gottes Wort ist, sagt am kürzesten der Apostel Paulus in dem Satz (Rom. x. 4) *telos (gar) nomou Christos* : das Ziel (Ende und Sinn) des alten Testaments, ist Christus. Damit ist alles gesagt. Und es kann sich für uns nur darum handeln, darum über nachzudenken, was damit gesagt ist" ¹. (See a lecture published in *Zwischen den Zeiten* V. 5., Munich, on *Das alte Testament als Gottes Wort*.) Some results of the use of this method are to be seen in Vischer's own books including *Das Christuszeugnis des Alten Testaments* (Munich, 1935), and in Gerhard Schmidt's *Das Alte Testament im kirchlichen Unterricht* (Munich, 1937). For those who interpret it "theologically" the Old Testament is not an end in itself but the most hidden side of the revelation

¹ "That the Old Testament is the Word of God, and just how far it is the Word of God, is said most briefly by the Apostle Paul in the verse : Christ is the end of the Law (Rom. x. 4). The end, that is to say the purpose and meaning of the Old Testament is Christ. Everything is contained in that verse. Our concern can only be to work out and think through what is said there."

in Christ. We may speak of a "Christo-centricism" which emphasises the view of the pre-existence of Christ expressed in Hebrews i. 1 more than the historical view of Hebrews i. 2.

How far is this method a return to "dogmatic" or "allegorical" methods? Vischer resolutely rejects the typological and allegorical method. Others think that it is right in principle. And in using the new method it is indeed impossible to avoid allegory even though the scientific methods of exegesis mentioned at the beginning are used. The mixture of a dogmatic view concerning a magical authority of Scripture with a selective use of the results obtained by scientific methods must lead to gnosticism (as in fact the Prologue of St. John's Gospel and the speculations in the epistles about the pre-existent Logos do). The Church's preaching, in my opinion, can only be helped by the interpretation of the true meaning of the texts themselves, and not by an interpretation of the later use of the texts — and this out of respect for the past. If God was really at work in Israel, He must have spoken realities and not enigmas to them. Isaiah, in a manner of speaking, is not dead in his hopes of the coming Messiah, but he lived in his belief in God's reality and election. The Messiah is not the end of his faith (as he is not the end of Christian faith either as far as I can see), but the reality of God, the same God whom Jesus Christ has shown to us as our Father, who forgives us our sins and who calls us into his Kingdom. The conception of "fulfilment in Christ", which determines the New Testament use of several parts of the Old Testament, is a conception which belongs to the time of the New Testament. It can only be maintained today in so far as we find something essential which the Old Testament data and the life and death of Jesus Christ have in common (e.g. Isaiah liii); not as a principle of exegesis for the Old Testament, but as a result of the exegesis of the Old and New Testaments together.

Scientific Research and the Gospel

Even though this "theological" method must be rejected, that does not mean that it does not put the right question: the difference between scientific research and the *Kerugma* — the preaching of the Church. But though we are right to distinguish science and the formulation of our belief, both must be viewed in relation to one another. A formulation of belief that uses Old Testament data ought to be founded on the results of exegesis, that is on the meaning of the Old Testament author. This means not that the *Kerugma* has been made dependent on human reason,

but on the light that God gives by means of exegesis. To put it shortly, exegesis is a science by the grace of God. The Scripture itself is never the object of our faith. That object is neither anybody nor anything in the service of God, but God himself.

We find the term "theology of the Old Testament" also in writings of scholars who follow the critical method. Two important publications with the same title should be mentioned: *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, one by W. Eichrodt (Leipzig, I. 1933, II. 1935, III. 1939), and the other by L. Köhler (Tübingen, 1936). Eichrodt aims at giving a systematic classification of insights into the religion of the Old Testament which have been gained by historical methods. He argues that the affinity of the Old Testament to the New is not of an historical nature, but that there is something essential in common — *Wesensverwandtschaft* — a concern for the Kingship of God in this world. Since this is the result of the exegesis of the Old Testament as well as of the New, one can speak of a real movement from the New to the Old. However such a possible *result* of exegesis can never be taken as Eichrodt takes it as the *regulating principle* of exegesis. He wants too much to be released from the limitations of the historical method (which can only speak of *dissecta membra*), and to achieve a complete system. This is sometimes accomplished at the cost of the given facts (e.g. I. 255 ff. *Heilshoffnung*, and elsewhere). "Historism" is another way of escape, viz. by ascribing a deeper meaning to the idea of history. History in the religious sense is the action of God amongst men. The lack of a direct connection between these acts in the Old and New Testaments is not an obstacle to the understanding of the particular acts.

Köhler is of the opinion that we cannot find in the Old Testament a basis for the classification of its theological contents. He chooses his system by asking what is "theologisch erheblich"¹. It is clear that this subjective approach can be a cause of one-sidedness. However Köhler's study shows very great historical and linguistic knowledge, and this makes his book important. As he treats of the cultus only under the head of anthropology he cannot give this complicated phenomenon a satisfactory place in his system. Consequently the priesthood receives a valuation which is not in agreement with the texts. Nevertheless Köhler's book is very useful, especially for his short and sharp definitions. On account of his exact examination of words and ideas and his

¹ "Theologically important."

aversion from speculations, we may consider his exegesis a correct one, and so his book is important to everyone whose object is the right understanding of the meaning of the Old Testament itself.

The last study of P. Volz, *Die Prophetengestalten des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart, 1938), also deserves honourable mention. It is a typically Protestant book, especially in its emphasis on the prophetic opposition to the cultus. Except for this one-sidedness the seriousness with the historical-critical method is applied is praiseworthy, and the results are useful to science as well as to the church.

Another little book that can help in the right understanding of the two ideas of "faith" and "history" is *Glaube und Geschichte im Alten Testament* by A. Weiser (Stuttgart, 1931).

Sociological and psychological insights

As important for the theologian and for the layman, and as illuminating the psychology of the Israelites, I would mention the excellent work of Johs. Pedersen, *Israel, its life and culture* (volumes I and II of the English edition, 1926. The sequel *Israel III, IV, Hellighed og Guddommelighed*, 1934, is, alas, not yet translated). Pedersen principally examines old Israel. His definitions of such ideas as soul, tribe, peace, honour and so on are of essential value. A. Causse, in *Du groupe ethnique à la communauté religieuse* (Paris, 1937), examines a longer period. Causse is related to Pedersen as well as to such scholars as A. Lods and E. Dhorme. His book, written in a flowing style, is a sociological study, which, however, especially in the treatment of the revelation which was the origin of the religion of Israel, shows the drawback of the onesidedness of the method. Also he does not give a sufficient explanation of the crisis in the social principles of the life of the people which was brought about by the prophetic message. Nevertheless for everyone who appreciates a broad view it is an important book. The same thing can be said for *l'Évolution religieuse d'Israel, tome I, La religion des Hébreux nomades*, by E. Dhorme (Brussels, 1937). To Old Testament scholarship this book does not bring much that is new, but it is an excellent summary of the results of a long life of scientific scholarship. The acceptance of the supposed antithesis of nomads and farmers shows that the evolutionism of Wellhausen has not been overcome, and the sociological-psychological method does not suffice for an understanding of the idea of revelation. In *de Godsdienst van Israel* by B. D. Erdmans (two volumes,

Assen, Holland, 1930), — a history of the religion of Israel — the Dutch reader finds not only a lot of original views, but also a right insight into the beginning of the religion of Israel: the election by the Lord and the salvation from the Egyptians.

For those who wish for a broad orientation, attention must be called to some summarising books. The first place must be given to O. Eissfeldt's introduction *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, 1934). The competent author gives an analysis of the books and a well chosen list of literature. With still more emphasis attention must be called to a book already mentioned, *Record and Revelation*, which contains essays about literature, history, religion, archaeology and languages as well as about the theology of the Old Testament (Wheeler Robinson), the Old Testament and Judaism (Montefiore), and the Old Testament and Christianity (Lofthouse). This book is an important introduction both for theologians and for non-theologians. The title itself shows that the revelation-character of the records is not forgotten.

In conclusion the series of commentaries, *Handbuch zum Alten Testament* (Tübingen), edited by Eissfeldt, must be mentioned. In short and conveniently arranged form the volumes already published (which naturally differ in value) present the results of critical methods. The other new series *die Botschaft des Alten Testaments* (Calwer Verlagverein, Stuttgart), consists mainly of studies by H. Frey. It shows a more "theological" point of view, although it is less speculative than the studies of the so-called "theological" school of exegesis.

★

Another choice of publications could naturally be made. However our point of view, the method of exegesis, has been able to bring us to the principal question: "How do you try to understand the books of the Old Testament?" The answer given here is: by listening with my whole heart and with my whole mind to the meaning of the authors. If the thought of the Christian theologian has become congenial to the original meaning, he has found material for the formulation of his faith. If not, or if not yet, he can only speak of insufficient historical knowledge. "The great difficulty which is caused by the understanding of another world than ours, will make the explainer often admit: *non possum*. 'For we only know in part'." But that is God's business, not ours. Exegesis is, as I have said, in the last resort a science by the grace of God.

The fact that I have added to this review some remarks on my own view may show the high importance which I attach to a right and respectful attitude to this the longest part of our Bible.

P. A. H. DE BOER.

Roman Catholic Exegesis

INITIATION BIBLIQUE : introduction à l'étude des Saintes Ecritures publiée sous la direction de A. Robert et A. Tricot. *Desclée & Cie, Paris, Tournai, Rome*. 1939. Price : fr. f. 90.—.

Would it be unfair to sum up a very widespread Protestant conception of the Roman Catholic attitude to the Bible by saying : the Roman Church does not encourage individual Bible Study, it imposes obscurantist interpretations, and the authority of the Bible is unduly subjected to the authority of tradition and the hierarchy ? But happily this popular Protestant view is by no means true to the facts.

1. In the first place, whatever may have been the case in other centuries, the modern Church of Rome does encourage the study of the Bible. Leo XIII wrote a famous encyclical on the subject (*Providentissimus Deus*) and established, in 1902, the Biblical Commission of Cardinals and scholars for the promotion of Biblical studies. It was during his pontificate that Père Lagrange founded at Jerusalem the "École Biblique Française". The late Pope, Pius XI, gave a strong impulse to Roman scholars to extend their biblical studies especially in the light of modern archaeological and historical discoveries. (See *La Vie Intellectuelle*, Paris, of January 25, 1939.) In 1939 the Stuttgart "Catholic Bible Study Centre" was founded to encourage wider reading of the Bible. The publication of *Initiation Biblique* is a still more interesting piece of evidence. It is intended for laymen. Its object is "to make the reader think and to awaken in him the desire to go to the texts in order to obtain directly from them the doctrine of life" (p. ix.). It is in fact a popular and comprehensive introduction to intelligent study of the Bible which could be of great service to lay members of any Christian communion.

2. Should the attitude of the Roman Church be condemned as "obscurantist" ? A reading of this book suggests that it should rather be described as one of "wise caution". Professor

Robert speaks of "a criticism which is prudent and exempt from rationalist prejudices" (p. 163). Professor Vagararay recalls the words of Leo XIII "*Primam esse historiae legem ne quid falsi dicere audeat, deinde ne quid veri non audeat*" (p. 324). And which of us, looking back at the history of Protestant criticism over the last hundred years, strewn as it is with the wrecks of critical theories inspired by rationalism, sentimentalism, humanitarianism, apocalypticism, and what Schweitzer did not hesitate to call "hatred" of the supernatural Gospel, would wish to pass a hard judgment on a Church which has been cautious in accepting the results of such prejudiced criticism?

Some of the replies to questions given by the Biblical Commission itself have been the occasion for particularly violent criticism. But these replies are documents which require particularly careful reading. They mean exactly what they say *and no more*. (See pp. 335-349, and some useful comments in *Theology*, London, July 1939.) Thus to take one example, a first reading of the reply of the Commission to a series of questions on the historical character of the first three chapters of Genesis (June 30, 1909) certainly suggests that it enforced a completely literal and "fundamentalist" interpretation and that even a "moderate evolutionism" (see p. 388) was excluded. But Roman Catholic scholars point out that the reply left a loophole in saying that "the sacred writer, in writing the first chapter of Genesis, did not intend to give scientific teaching on the intimate constitution of the visible world... but rather to give his people a popular account conformed to the current language of his contemporaries and adapted to their sentiments and to their intelligence" (p. 340, see also p. 22).

These last remarks lead on to the observation that the conception of "literary forms" (*genres littéraires*) plays a very big part in Roman Catholic exegesis. The cardinal point here is that "every affirmation of the sacred writer is exempt from error *in the sense in which he makes it*" (p. 25, *author's italics*). As a result "each form has its own truth" (*chaque genre a sa vérité*) "determined by the ends and means employed by the sacred writer.. To identify the end, the meaning, the implication of the writer: that is the proper work of exegesis"... (*loc cit*, see also p. 163.)

3. What then is the actual Roman view of the relation of the Bible to Tradition? (See pages 8-28, 324-335, 750-775). The Bible is the "*lieu théologique*". "The Protestant says: the Bible, and nothing but the Bible. We Catholics say: with the Bible the Tradition, and both these in the hands of the Church

which is our guardian on behalf of God and an interpreter of the sources of faith". (p. 768). It is a superficial view which regards Tradition and the Bible as two parallel and distinct sources of faith. First both with regard to the Old Testament and the New, Tradition exists before the writings, and the writings emanate, for the most part, from Tradition. "There is a living Gospel before there is any question of a written Gospel" (p. 771). This is not to say that that what is written simply repeats what has been said. It is a principle of faith that the deposit of revelation increases objectively both in the Old and the New Testaments. But every book, including the Bible, fixes thoughts in formulas which remain unchanged. This is an advantage but also a weakness. The Bible cannot defend itself against misinterpretations; but the Tradition which comes from Christ and is sustained by the Holy Spirit, is always there to defend the true meaning against heresy, to interpret it in relation to the needs of the time, and to bring out from it riches which lie beneath the surface. The same line of thought holds true for the Church, for Tradition is the voice of the Church in the past.

But to understand the spiritual meaning we must read as members of the Body to which the Bible was given. "Every plant has its natural climate, without which it cannot live and grow or produce its flower and fruit. The Church is the climate of the Word of God" (p. 773). This means accepting the (very few) authoritative interpretations, respecting the "analogy of faith" (i.e. the necessary harmony of the dogmas), and reading the Bible as a message from faith to faith (p. 328).

Thus the Roman Catholic student of the Bible has in reality a very considerable degree of freedom. The one thing necessary is that he should read it as a member of the Church. Is this a disadvantage? Is it a necessity from which any critic who wishes to understand the Bible is free? There is sound sense in the observation that "actually 'independent criticism' is a myth. There are only some critics who think themselves independent" (p. 323). The Roman Catholic critics are surely on sound ground when they insist that "even from the human point of view, Catholic exegesis has a double advantage over so-called 'independent criticism'... It takes place in the same spiritual atmosphere as that in which... the books of the New Testament were composed... and it reads them in the light of the living history of the Church coming down from the first centuries" (*ibid.*). Does not the best Protestant exegesis make a very similar claim?

F. H. H.

Notes on Contributors and Articles

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SUZANNE DE DIETRICH is a secretary of the World's Student Christian Federation. The studies on Jeremiah are based on addresses given at the W.S.C.F. camp at Nunspeet, Holland in August 1939.

The Chronicle article on the Youth and Religion Campaign in China consists of extracts from the report of the executive secretary Mr. C. C. Liang. Mr. Liang was a delegate to the Amsterdam Conference.

The comments on the Amsterdam Conference in the Chronicle by Ratibor Djurdjevic are reproduced by the kind permission of the editor of *World's Youth*.

The Book Reviews are by Professor P. A. H. de Boer of the Theological Faculty of the University of Leyden, and Francis House of the W.S.C.F.

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Owing to censorship delays an article for this issue on "The Eucharist and the Old Testament" by the Rev. John Ramsbotham did not arrive in time but will appear in the First Quarter for 1940.

Die Neuerscheinungen



des Furche-Verlages

DAS HOCHZEITLICHE KLEID. Eine Einführung in die Gleichnisse Jesu über die rechte Jüngerschaft. Von Prof. *D. Wilhelm Michaelis* (Bern). 288 S. Kaschurbd. RM. 4.80, Leinen RM. 5.80.

Mit diesem 2. Band hat das Werk von Wilhelm Michaelis über die Gleichnisse Jesu seinen Abschluss gefunden. Es ist gleich wichtig für Pfarrer und Gemeinde.

CHRISTUS LEBT. Ein Buch von fruchtbarem Dienst in Lehre und Leben. In Zusammenarbeit mit 40 Männern und Frauen der kirchlichen Arbeit und Mission herausgegeben von Pastor *Hans Dannenbaum*. 472 S. Kaschurbd. RM. 5.60, Leinen RM. 6.80.

Das Werk gibt einen packenden Querschnitt durch die heutige kirchliche und erweckliche Arbeit. Jeder Abschnitt ist von einem erfahrenen Kenner des jeweiligen Arbeitsgebietes bearbeitet.

DER FRIEDE GOTTES. Ein Buch aus Tagen der Stille und Besinnung. In Gemeinschaft mit 16 Männern der Kirche und Mission herausgegeben von Prälat Lic. *Theodor Schlatter*. 208 S. Kaschurbd. RM. 3.60.

Aus dem Inhalt: Mit Christus / Die Wahrheit der Geschichte vom Sündenfall / Das Gesicht des Heiden / Das unruhige Herz / Das Heil vor Christus / Christus, der Weg zu Gott / Recht und Grenze der Toleranz innerhalb der Kirche / Erlebtes vom Neuanfang der Kirche / Im Frieden Gottes mitten in der Welt / Der Friede Gottes / Im Frieden Gottes bleiben, heisst in der Gemeinde stehen / Die ewige Gottesstadt.

VORZEICHEN DER ZUKUNFT. Eine Einführung in den zweiten Brief an die Thessalonicher. Von Pastor *Georg Helbig*. Kaschurbd. RM. 1.80, Leinen RM. 2.40.

Die "Vorzeichen der Zukunft" bedeuten nichts anderes als den Ruf zur Nüchternheit und Wachsamkeit, dass einer würdig werden möge, zu stehen vor des Menschen Sohn.

NICHTS VERDAMMLICHES. Eine frohe Kunde für ernste Menschen. Zwanzig Bibelstunden über den Römerbrief in Auswahl, gehalten in der Stadtmissionskirche zu Berlin. Von Pastor und Missionsinspektor *Hans Dannenbaum*. 200 S. Kaschurbd. RM. 3.60, Leinen RM. 4.50.

Eine Römerbriefauslegung, die sich praktisch bewährt hat. Sie ist auch dem einfachen Bibelleser voll verständlich.

DER WEG ZU CHRISTUS bezeugt dem Menschen von heute. Von Pastor Lic. *Hans R. Brandenburg*. 224 S. Geschenkb. RM. 3.—.

Aus dem Inhalt: Religion oder Glaube? / Der redende Gott / Die Bibel / Jesus, wer ist er? / Unter dem Einfluss Jesu / Die Entscheidung / Der neue Mensch / Geborene Menschen / Die Gemeinde Jesu.

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